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FEBRUARY 1914

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

A splendid novel of adventure in the Northland by Harold Bindloss

"For the Allinson Honor"

begins in this issue

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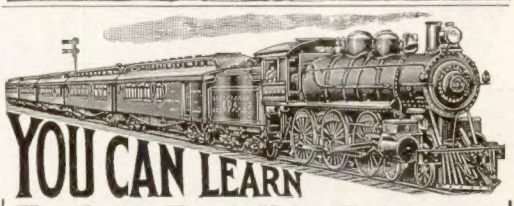

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JOHN I. BROWN & SON Boston, Mass.

THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR FEBRUARY, 1914

Next Month

"THE Furnace of Gold" is one of the many items in the March BLUE BOOK to which we wish to call particular attention. This novelette by Crittenden Marriott is one of the "rapid-fire" variety, and narrates a swift succession of exciting events which will hold you absorbed from beginning to end. A second installment of "For The Allinson Honor" finds its central figure proving that he is by no means "the family fool," and winning his way amid all sorts of difficulties in the desperate game he is playing, up in the Canadian wilds. "Innocence," that already much-discussed novel of New York's Bohemia, also comes to one of its most powerful episodes. There will also be some delightful and characteristic exploits of "The Diplomatic Free Lance;" "Blue-Funk Carson," the African pioneer; "Matt Bardeen, master diver;" "Magnum, the scientific consultant;" and other old BLUE BOOK acquaintances. In all, there will be a round score of short stories—and every one of these will be of the kind that have made the BLUE BOOK famous for its fiction. This March issue will be on sale at all news-stands February 1st.

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COVER DESIGN: Painted by Henry Hutt

STAGELAND.....The Latest Pictures of Plays and Players

THREE GREAT NOVELS IN SERIAL FORM

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A remarkable novel of daring adventure and romance in the Northern wilderness: the "family fool" sets out to win his spurs.

INNOCENCE.....Edwin Bliss..... 712
The fifth installment of this sensational novel: Landrum sells "Innocence" to a saloon-keeper; Esther is dismissed from Yvonne's.

THE BLUE LIZARD.....James Francis Dwyer..... 806
The concluding episode in this splendid novel: the castaways face their final struggle on the sinking island.

ONE COMPLETE NOVELETTE

THE RED SECRET.....Stanley M. Shaw..... 759
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SEVENTEEN REMARKABLE SHORT STORIES

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A NEW YEAR SILHOUETTE.....Elizabeth Payne..... 691
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He finds himself up against a real bad-man.

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THE PHANTOM SKYSCRAPER.....Guy C. Baker..... 822
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THE CAPTAIN-DOWAGER.....Alice Duncan..... 828
How a woman piloted the good ship *Exporter* in a race with death.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe to THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through agents unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

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This and the picture on the opposite page show HAZEL DAWN as Gaby Gaufrette, JOHN E. YOUNG as Albert, and

ALMA FRANCIS as Yvonne, in "The Little Café." *Photograph by White, New York.*

"The Little Café"

Book and Lyrics by C. M. S. McLellan.
Music by Ivan Caryll

PHILIBERT, the proprietor of the Little Café, discovers that ALBERT LORIFLAN, one of his waiters, is about to inherit a title and a million francs. The wily PHILIBERT schemes to defraud ALBERT out of a portion of his inheritance; and with this end in view, he inveigles the waiter into signing a contract whereby he binds himself to remain in PHILIBERT's employ for twenty years, or else forfeit a large sum of money. When ALBERT learns of his inheritance, however, he surprises the guileful PHILIBERT by staying on as a waiter and thus evading payment of the forfeit. While he thus continues as an humble servant in the daytime, ALBERT none the less enjoys his inheritance, for at night he forthwith begins to lead the gay life, and becomes involved in sundry love affairs. His most prominent inamorata is GABY GAUFRETTE, who is known as the "Queen of the All-night Restaurants." ALBERT also has a jealous admirer in the person of KATZIOLINKA, an Hungarian café *chanteuse*—but the real lady of his heart is YVONNE, the daughter of none other than PHILIBERT himself. At first YVONNE has spurned ALBERT, but she grows to love him; when their engagement is announced PHILIBERT is perforce constrained to release the young man from his contract, and peace thereupon returns to the Little Café. Especially notable among the many songs of this piece are: "Serve the Cavaire," "Thy Mouth is a Rose," and "Just Because It's You."

Produced by Klaw and Erlanger

A scene from "The Little Café:" GRACE LEIGH as Katziolinka, ELEANOR ST. CLAIR as Ilsa, ETHEL DAVIES as Alma, TRIXIE WHITFORD as Louka, LILLIAN RICE as Zora, ALYS BELGA as Thryza, and LORAYNE LESLIE as Oola. *Photograph by White, New York.*

CHARLES WALDRON as John Hemingway, and SARA VON LEER as Mrs. Hemingway, in "The Strange Woman." *Photograph by the Hughes Company, Baltimore, Md*

"The Strange Woman"

By William J. Hulburt

JOHN HEMINGWAY, a native son of Delphi, Iowa, has gone to Paris to study architecture and has become famous in his chosen profession. He meets and falls in love with INEZ PIERREFOND, a New Orleans woman of great charm, who has lived most of her life abroad and who holds somewhat "advanced" ideas as to the matrimonial relation. She reciprocates HEMINGWAY'S love, and he brings her home to Delphi with him, introducing her to his mother and friends as his *fiancée*. INEZ' Parisian gowns and manners arouse the jealous enmity of the Delphi people. They investigate her past, and find that she has been married before and that she is a believer in free love. They call upon her and denounce her. Whereupon, she retaliates by showing how they themselves, in spite of their "rural simplicity," are no better than she—how a married man among them is having affairs with two of the women present, and so forth. In revenge, the Delphi people plan to expose INEZ to JOHN'S mother. Meanwhile INEZ has decided to explain her beliefs to MRS. HEMINGWAY; but when the younger woman hears the mother's appealing story of her lifelong care for and devotion to her son, she feels that it would be needlessly cruel to hurt MRS. HEMINGWAY by her story, and that she will have an old-fashioned church wedding after all. JOHN is surprised but willing—and there are joy and nuptials in the house of HEMINGWAY.

Produced by Klaw and Erlanger

A scene from "The Strange Woman:" FRANCES WHITEHOUSE as Cora Whitman, LOIS FRANCES CLARK as Clara Hemingway SARAH McVICKER as Kate McMasters, ELSIE FERGUSON as Inez de Pierrefond, MRS. FELIX MORRIS as Mrs. Abbe, and GEORGIA DREW MENDUM as May Armstrong. *Photographs by the Hughes Company, Baltimore, Md.*

ELSIE FERGUSON as Inez de Pierrefond, in "The Strange Woman."

At the left FORBES ROBERTSON as Julius Caesar, and GERTRUDE ELLIOTT as Cleopatra; at right, GERTRUDE ELLIOTT as Little Britain, and FORBES ROBERTSON as the Professor, in "Mice and Men."

Above, at left FORBES ROBERTSON as Othello; at right, GERTRUDE ELLIOTT as Desdemona. Below, GERTRUDE ELLIOTT as Portia, and FORBES ROBERTSON as Shylock, in the "Merchant of Venice."

"The Tongues of Men"

By Edward Childs Carpenter

THE REVEREND PENFIELD STURGIS becomes much wrought up over what he regards as the iniquity of a new opera recently produced, and over what he is pleased to consider the improprieties of the prima donna's interpretation of the title rôle. So excited does the good clergyman become that he preaches a sermon in denunciation of the opera and of the singer; this naturally arouses great attention and results in the interference of the police with further performances of the piece. Now it happened that JANE BARTLETT, the opera singer who has so stirred up the REVEREND STURGIS, was present in the church at the time of his attack upon her. Without disclosing her identity, she interviews him in the vestry afterward; they fall into an argument, and the actress invites the clergyman to call upon her and discuss the matter. He accepts her invitation; and after a series of interviews which result in divers complications, STURGIS becomes convinced that he was in the wrong, writes her a letter of apology—and, although he has been engaged to GEORGINE DARIGAL, the daughter of a fellow clergyman, he proposes marriage to JANE BARTLETT. She refuses, and with this her victory is complete, for "the tongues of men" speaking against her are now thoroughly silenced.

Produced by Maurice Campbell

HOMER GRANVILLE as Loughran, ALBERT REED as Goadby, FRANK GILLMORE as Penfield Sturgis, and HENRIETTA CROSMAN as Jane Bartlett, in "The Tongues of Men." *Photograph by White, New York.*

FREDERICK TRUESDELL as Dr. Lyn Fanshaw, HENRIETTA CROSMAN as Jane Bartlett, FRANK GILLMORE as Rev. Penfield Sturgis, and GLADYS ALEXANDRIA as Georgine Darigal, in "The Tongues of Men." *Photograph by White, New York*

JOSEPHINE WHITTELL as Stephanie, in "The Madcap Duchess." *Photograph by White, New York.*

"The Madcap Duchess"

Book by Justin Huntly M'Carthy and David Stevens. Music by Victor Herbert

RENAUD, Prince of St. Pol during the regency of PHILLIP II, falls in love with the MARQUISE STEPHANIE, who is under the protection of no other than PHILLIP himself. Angered at the importunate advances of the young prince, PHILLIP banishes RENAUD to Artois, forbidding him to return to Paris under pain of imprisonment. Moreover, state reasons make it advisable that RENAUD marry his neighbor, the DUCHESS SERAPHINA of Bapaume. Because of his infatuation for STEPHANIE, RENAUD has paid no attention to SERAPHINA; and the DUCHESS, angered at the political pressure put upon her, has likewise evaded meeting RENAUD. The DUCHESS, however, is an adventurous, mischievous young woman—"a merry devil in petticoats," she has been called. And now when she hears that RENAUD plans to risk the wrath of the REGENT and return to Paris, she resolves to take a hand in the game herself. Disguised in male attire, the madcap SERAPHINA escapes from her guardians and makes her way to Paris. There she and RENAUD meet, and, ignorant of each other's identity, fall in love. The rest is mirth music and matrimony.

Produced by H. H. Frazee

A scene from "The Madcap Duchess:" ANN SWINBURNE as Seraphina, DAVID ANDRADA as Watteau, and members of the chorus. *Photograph by White, New York.*

ANN SWINBURNE as Seraphina, and GLENN HALL as Renaud, in "The Madcap Duchess." *Photograph by White, New York.*

February 1914

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

Vol. XVIII No. 4

For the Allinson Honor

A NOVEL OF ROMANTIC ADVENTURE IN THE NORTHERN WILDS

by HAROLD BINDLOSS

Author of "A Delilah of the Snows," "Winston of the Prairie," etc.

This is a story of desperate adventure and passionate romance in the Northern wilderness: it therefore begins in England, with a lady and gentleman in conversation beside a tea-table on the lawn. Soon the scene changes, however; and the reader presently finds himself engrossed in a narrative of swift action and vivid incident, peopled by men and women involved in a powerfully dramatic situation. It will be one of the most talked-about novels of the year.

I

THE TENANT AT THE FIRS

IT WAS a hot autumn afternoon. Mrs. Olcott, a young and attractive woman, reclined in a canvas chair beside a tea-table on the lawn in front of the cottage she had lately taken in the country. Her thin white dress displayed a slender and rather girlish form; her dark hair emphasized the delicate coloring of her face, which wore a nervous look. As a matter of fact, she felt disturbed. Clare Olcott needed somebody to take care of her; but she had few friends, and her husband held a government appointment in West Africa. His pay was moderate and he had no private means. His relatives justified their neglect of his wife by the reflection that he had married beneath him; and this was why he had commended her, with confidence, to the protection of a friend.

Andrew Allinson, who had made Olcott's acquaintance when serving as lieutenant of yeomanry during the Boer campaign, sat on a grassy bank near by, with a teacup in his hand. He was strongly built, and negligently dressed in knickerbockers and shooting jacket. The bicycle he had just ridden leaned

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against the hedge. Andrew had lately reached his twenty-ninth year. He had large blue eyes that met you with a direct glance, a broad forehead, and a strong jaw. On the whole, he was a good-looking man, but his characteristic expression was one of rather heavy good humor. Though by no means stupid, he had never done anything remarkable, and most of the Allinsons thought him slow.

Raising himself a little, he looked slowly round. There were flowers in the borders about the tiny lawn, and creepers draped the front of the house. The still air was filled with the drone of bees; all was eminently peaceful.

"How do you like the place?" he asked. "It's nicer than London in weather like this, and you're looking better than you did when I saw you there."

Mrs. Olcott gave him a grateful smile.

"I haven't regretted leaving town. I was miserable and scarcely saw anybody after Tom sailed. Our small flat was too far from the few people I knew; and even if it had been nearer, I couldn't entertain. I was feeling very downhearted the day you called."

Andrew remembered having found her looking very forlorn in a dingy and shabbily furnished room. She was sitting at a writing-table with a pile of bills before her, about which she had made a naïve confession.

"I'm glad you find things pleasant here; I thought you would," he said.

"It's so fresh and green. In the morning and at sunset the moorland air's like wine. Then the house is very pretty and remarkably cheap."

She looked at him sharply, for he had found the house for her; but he answered with heavy calm.

"I don't think it's dear."

After that there was a few moments' silence, during which they heard the soft splash of a stream falling into the valley. Then he turned to her with a resolute air.

"And now, about those bills? You have put me off once or twice, but I want to see them."

Mrs. Olcott colored and hesitated, but she opened a drawer in the table and took out a bundle of papers, which she handed to him. To her surprise and consternation, he counted them before he put them into his pocket.

"These are not all. Give me the others."

"I can manage about the rest," she protested.

"Let me have them; you can't begin here in difficulties."

Mrs. Olcott rose, and with quiet pity he watched her enter the house. She was not a capable woman, and he was thankful that she had not got into worse embarrassments. She came back, still somewhat flushed, and gave him a few more papers.

"I'm afraid I'm a wretchedly bad manager," she confessed. "As soon as my next remittance comes, I will send you a check."

"When it suits you," he said, and added thoughtfully: "One of us should tell your husband about this; perhaps it had better be you."

She smiled, for he was now and then boyishly ingenuous. He sat directly opposite the gate, where all passers-by could see him, and he had somehow an unfortunate air of being at home in the place.

"Yes," she said, "I will write by the first mail. I feel less embarrassed because Tom told me that if I was ever in any difficulty I might consult you. He described you as the right sort—and I have found it true."

"I suppose you know that I owe a good deal to your husband," Andrew answered awkwardly.

"He told me that you and he were in the field hospital together for a time, and before then he helped you in some way when you were wounded, but he never said much about it. What did he do? You may smoke while you tell me."

"I think you ought to know, because it will show the claim Tom has on me."

Andrew lighted a cigarette and began in a disjointed manner, for he was not a fluent speaker:

"It was a dazzlingly bright morning and getting very hot—our side had been badly cut up in the dark, and we were getting back, a mixed crowd of strag-

glers, a few miles behind the brigade. Tom and Sergeant Carnally, the Canadian, had no proper business with the wreck of my squadron, but there they were. Anyhow, only half of us were mounted, and when we found ourselves cut off we tried to hold a kopje—the horses back in a hollow, except mine, which was shot as I dismounted. I was fond of the poor brute, and I suppose that made me savage, for I felt that I must get the fellow who killed it."

He paused and his face hardened.

"There we were, lying among the stones, with the sun blazing down on us, spurts of sand jumping up where the Mauser bullets struck. Now and then a man dropped his rifle and the rest of us set our teeth. It wasn't a spectacular fight, and we kept it up in a very informal way, two or three commissioned officers, dismounted troopers, and a few lost line Tommies firing as they got a chance. The man I wanted had gone to earth beside a big flat stone, and I dropped the bullets close about it—three hundred yards, I made it and the light good. I suppose I was so keen on my shooting that I didn't pay much attention when somebody said they were flanking us; and the next thing I knew a Boer had put a bullet in my leg. Anyhow, I couldn't get up, and when I looked round there was no one about. Then I must have shouted, for Tom came running back, with the sand spurting all around. Carnally was behind him. It looked like certain death, but Tom got hold of me, and dragged me a few yards before Carnally came up. Then we all dropped behind a big stone, and I'm not clear about the rest. Somebody had heard the firing and detached a squadron with a gun. But I can still picture Tom, running with his face set, through the spurting sand—one doesn't forget things like that."

The blood crept into Clare Olcott's pale cheeks and her eyes shone. No one could have doubted that she admired and loved her absent husband.

"Were you not with Carnally when he broke out of the prison camp?" she asked presently.

"I was. Our guard was friendly and careless, and we picked up a hint of a movement we thought our army ought to know about. We were caged in behind a very awkward fence, but I'd found a wire-nipper in the sand—they were used to cut defense entanglements. Then we held a council and decided that somebody must break out with the news, but that while two men might do so, more would have no chance to dodge the guard. Carnally and I were picked, and after waiting for a dark night we cut the wire and crawled out, close behind a sentry we hadn't seen. Of course, knowing what we did about the Boers' intentions, we couldn't give up our plan."

Mrs. Olcott recognized that Andrew Allinson was not the man to abandon a duty, though he was unarmed and the sentry carried a magazine rifle.

"Well," he resumed, "I crept up and seized the fellow by the leg. He dropped his rifle, and Carnally slipped away. We'd arranged that if we got out, one was not to stop for the other."

"But what happened to you? Did the Boer pick up his rifle?"

"No," said Andrew quietly, "I got it first."

"But —" said Mrs. Olcott, and stopped.

Andrew smiled.

"You see, he had called out when I grabbed him, and several of his friends were running up. I didn't think he'd noticed Carnally, who had got clear off, and there was a chance of it's being some time before they missed him. Then the fellow had shown us one or two small favors—given me some tobacco, among other things he might have got into trouble for."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Olcott expressively. "So you let them take you back to prison. But what about the Canadian?"

"He got through safely and they made a fuss over him. Offered him a commission, which he was too sensible to take."

"Tom came home promoted and got his West African appointment; Carnally could have had a commission; and you went back to prison. Though of course they deserved it, didn't it strike you that the rewards were not very fairly shared out?"

"I believe my people were disap-

pointed when I returned as undistinguished as I went out, though I don't know that they were surprised. So far as I was concerned, it was an inglorious campaign—twice in a hospital, and some months in a prison camp. And yet, I'll admit that I left England determined on doing something brilliant."

Mrs. Olcott made no remark. He did not seem to attach much importance to the incident that had secured his comrade's escape. His conduct was not of the kind that catches the public eye, but her husband, whose opinion was worth having, believed in Allinson.

"Well," he resumed, "I've stayed some time. Are you sure you're quite comfortable here? There's nothing you feel short of?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I ought to be happy. It's perhaps a trifle quiet: nobody has called on me yet."

"I dare say that can be altered," he replied; and though she did not suppose her solitude was likely to be enlivened at his request, she gave him her hand gratefully and let him go.

Picking up his bicycle, he wheeled it up the road, which wound between yellow harvest fields and dark-green clover to the long ascent of the moor. Andrew noticed it all with quiet appreciation, though he was thinking hard as he slowly climbed the hill. He had made Mrs. Olcott a promise, and he meant to keep it, but the thing was beginning to look more difficult than he had imagined. His sisters might have helped him by recognizing the lonely woman, but they had shown some prejudice against her, and this was unfortunate, for their attitude would have its effect on their neighbors.

The Allinsons were people of importance in the countryside, and the history of the family was not without romance. Long ago an Andrew Allinson had become possessed, by violence, most probably, of a strong stone house, half fortress, half farmstead, that commanded a fertile dale up which the Scots moss-troopers often rode to the foray. Later, members of the family appeared as London goldsmiths in Queen Anne's reign. Later still, Andrew's grandfather, retiring from his banking business, resumed the coat of arms, bought back the homestead and built a commodious house about it. On his death it was discovered that his property had shrunk in value, and his shrewd north-country widow made her son re-open the family business. He had prospered and maintained the best traditions of the ancient firm, for Allinson & Son was noted for caution, decorum and strict probity.

To its head's keen disappointment, his only son, Andrew, showed no aptitude for commerce, and after two years in the counting-house was allowed to follow his own devices. Then on the marriage of Andrew's sister to a clever young business man, the latter was made a partner. Soon after this, Andrew's father died, leaving him a large share of his money, which was, however, to remain in the business, over which his brother-in-law, Leonard Hathersage, now had control.

When the gradient grew easier, Andrew mounted, but got down again with a frown a few minutes later. The Boer's nicked bullet had badly torn the muscles of his thigh, and now and then the old wound troubled him. Though he loved horses, he could no longer ride far with pleasure, and, being of active temperament, had taken to the bicycle.

He had not gone far before he saw a girl ride out from behind a grove of gnarled spruce firs, and he joined her when she pulled up her horse to wait for him. Ethel Hillyard looked well in the saddle: tall and rather largely built, she was nevertheless graceful and generally characterized by an air of dignified repose. Now, however, there was amusement in the fine gray eyes she fixed on Andrew.

"You look moody—and that's not usual," she said.

They were old friends, and Andrew answered her confidentially.

"I've been thinking and, for another thing, I found I couldn't get up this bit of a hill. I suppose it oughtn't to worry me, but it does. You see, a lameness that comes on when I least expect it is all I brought back from South Africa."

Ethel gave him a sympathetic nod as she started her horse.

"It's a pity, but you might have suffered worse; and, after all, distinction is sometimes cheaply gained."

"You don't win it by keeping people busy curing you and seeing that you don't break out of prison camps," Andrew retorted grimly.

"But what else were you thinking of that disturbed you?"

"My thoughts were, so to speak, all of a piece—one led to another. I did nothing in South Africa, and it has struck me lately that I haven't done much anywhere else, except to catch salmon in Norway and shoot a few Canadian deer. Now there's Leonard, who's not an Allinson, making money for all of us and managing the firm."

"Leonard got money and the opportunity for making more from Allinson's."

"That's true, but it doesn't excuse me. I ought to be a power in the firm, and I don't suppose I could even keep one of its books properly."

He walked on in silence for the next minute or two and his companion watched him with interest. His brows were knit; his brown face looked strong as well as thoughtful, and Ethel did not agree with his relatives, who thought him a bit of a fool. She was inclined to believe that Leonard had spread that impression and the other had adopted it without consideration. Andrew had been idle, but that was his worst fault, and he might change. There was, however, nothing significant in his taking her into his confidence; he had often done so, though she realized with half regretful acquiescence that it was only as a confidante that he thought of her. He could not have chosen a better one, for Ethel Hillyard was a girl of unusual character, and she now determined to exert her influence for his benefit.

"Isn't Allinson's rather branching out of late?" she asked.

"It is. The West African gold mine was a new kind of venture, though it's paying handsomely; and we're now taking up a mine in Canada. Of course, the old private banking business has gone under and one must move with the times; but, in a sense, it's a pity."

Ethel understood him.

"Perhaps it isn't necessary that you should be good at bookkeeping," she said. "Is there no place for you in these new foreign schemes? You have traveled in the Canadian bush to shoot deer, and you seemed to like it; wouldn't it be as interesting if you went there to look for minerals or manage a mine? You would have the free life in the wilds, but with an object."

"There's something in that," Andrew replied thoughtfully. "I happen to know the country where the mine is, and it's unusually rough. It's curious that you have made a hazy idea I've had a little clearer. I'll think over the thing."

Ethel knew that she had said enough. She would miss the man if he went away, but it would be better for him and she knew that she would never have more than his liking.

"Where is the mine?" she asked.

"It's among the rocks some distance back from the Lake of Shadows in western Ontario."

"The Lake of Shadows!" Ethel exclaimed. "A friend I made in London used to go there with her father for fishing and shooting; but that's not important."

"Well," said Andrew, "I've talked enough about myself. There's a favor I want to ask. Will you call on Mrs. Olcott?"

Ethel started. Mrs. Olcott was young and pretty; nobody knew anything about her husband; Andrew's visits had already excited comment.

"Why should I call?" she inquired.

He gave her the best reasons he could think of for befriending the lonely woman, and she pondered them for a moment or two. Then she asked bluntly:

"How was it that Mrs. Olcott chose this neighborhood, where she knows nobody?"

"I suggested it," said Andrew, simply. "The Firs was empty, and she has few friends anywhere."

Though she had attached no importance to the remarks that had been made about him, Ethel found his unembarrassed candor reassuring. He had, however, asked her to do something that was harder than he imagined, and she hesitated.

"Very well," she said, "I will call."

"Thanks. I knew I could count on you."

They had now reached the top of the hill, and Ethel took a crossroad while Andrew mounted his bicycle, but she turned her head, and watched him ride across the moor. Andrew, however, did not look back at her, and by and by she urged her horse to a trot.

II

THE FAMILY PRIDE

THE house which Andrew's grandfather had built had for years been let with its shooting rights. Ghyllside, however, where Andrew lived, was a commodious house, and Leonard Hathersage was frequently glad to spend a week-end there. He and his wife had arrived on the previous evening, and he was now busy in the library while Andrew sat talking to his sisters on the terrace.

Though the light was fading, it was not yet dark, and the air was still and fragrant with flowers. Yew hedges and shrubberies were growing indistinct; a clump of firs in a neighboring meadow loomed up black and shadowy, but a band of pale saffron light still shone behind the hall on the edge of the moorland a mile away.

Andrew, who had early lost his mother, had three sisters. Florence, Leonard's wife, his senior by several years, was a tall, prim and rather domineering woman; Gertrude, who had married Antony Wannop, a local gentleman, was gentler and less decided than her sister; Hilda, the youngest of all, was little, dark and impulsive.

Wannop leaned on the terrace wall between the flower urns with a cigar in his mouth. He was stout and generally marked by a bluff geniality.

"Where did you go this afternoon, Andrew, when you wouldn't come with us to the Warringtons'?" Hilda asked.

Andrew would have preferred to evade the question, but that seemed impossible.

"I went to see Mrs. Olcott."

"Again!" exclaimed Hilda, who prided herself on being blunt.

Wannop chuckled softly, but Florence claimed Andrew's attention.

"Don't you think you have been there often enough?"

"It hasn't struck me in that light."

"Then," replied Florence, "I feel it's time it did."

"Come now!" Wannop broke in. "Three to one is hardly fair. Don't be bullied, Andrew; a bachelor can be independent."

"How do you make it three?" Hilda asked. "Only Florence and I mentioned the matter."

"I am, of course, acquainted with Gertrude's views," Wannop explained.

Hilda laughed. Antony, with his characteristic maladroitness, had somehow made things worse, and Andrew's face hardened. His sisters were generally candid with him, but they had gone too far. With a thoughtlessness he sometimes showed, he had told them nothing about his acquaintance with Clare Olcott's husband.

"You're not much of an ally," he said with a dry smile. "Anyway, as there's no reason why I shouldn't go to The Firs, I'm not likely to be deterred. I may as well mention that I met Ethel Hillyard and begged her to call."

"On Mrs. Olcott?" Florence cried. "What did she say?"

"She promised."

The astonishment of the others was obvious, but Hilda was the only one who ventured to express it.

"Andrew, you're a wonder! You haven't the least idea of scheming, and you'd spoil the best plot you took a hand in, and yet you have a funny, blundering way of getting hard things done."

"You have hinted that I was a bit of a fool," said Andrew, "but I don't see why this should be hard."

As an explanation was undesirable, Hilda let his remark pass and addressed the others.

"He has beaten us and we may as well give in gracefully. If Ethel goes, all the people who count will follow her."

"There's more in Andrew than his friends suspect," Wannop observed, laughing.

They let the subject drop, and Florence went in search of her husband.

"What's your opinion of Allinson's new policy, Andrew?" Wannop asked.

"I don't know what to think. One can be too conservative nowadays, but I'll confess that I liked the firm's old-fashioned staidness better. Even the old dingy offices somehow made you feel that the Allinsons were sober, responsible people. The new place, with its brass-work, plate-glass and gilding was somewhat of a shock to me; but the business is flourishing. Mining speculation was quite out of my father's line, but Leonard makes it pay."

"I've a few thousands in the African concern," Wannop remarked with complacent satisfaction. "As it looks as if I'd get my money back in about seven years, I wish I'd put in twice as much."

"Well," said Hilda, "I don't agree with Leonard's methods. They're vulgarly assertive, and the new offices strike me as being out of place. Allinson's ought to be more dignified."

He looked up with a reserved smile. "I don't think it's likely that anybody ever will."

Andrew got up and started toward the house.

"I must have a talk with Leonard," he said.

When he had left them, Wannop turned to the others.

"Now and then you can see the old stock in Andrew; and, after all, he has a controlling interest in the firm."

"Andrew may not do much good," Hilda declared, "but he'll do Allinson's no harm. He'll stick to the best of the old traditions." She paused with a laugh. "Perhaps we're silly in our family pride and sometimes think ourselves better than our neighbors with very little reason; but it's a clean pride. We're a mercantile family, but Allinson's has always ranked with the Bank of England."

When Andrew reached the library, his brother-in-law sat at a writing-table on which stood a tall silver lamp. The strong light fell upon him, showing his thin face and tall, spare figure. His hair receded somewhat from his high forehead, and he had the colorless complexion of a man who lives much indoors; but his eyes were singularly penetrating. Dressed with fastidious neatness, he had an air of elegance and, by comparison, made Andrew, who was of robuster build, look heavy and awkward.

"I'm glad of an excuse for stopping," he said. "Will you sit down and smoke?"

"What are you doing? I thought you came here for a rest," said Andrew, lighting a cigarette.

"The firm is a hard task-master, and it's difficult to get a few minutes undisturbed in town. That's why I brought these papers down. Writing a prospectus is a business which demands both caution and imagination. Would you like to see the draft?"

"I thought a boundless optimism was the most essential thing," Andrew replied, taking the paper handed him. "You're moderate," he continued when he had read it. "Ten per cent is all you promise, though as far as my experience goes, twenty's the more usual thing."

"Allinson's does not promise more than it can fulfill."

"That's true and quite in accordance with my views. Until lately, however, prospectuses were very much out of our line."

Leonard was surprised and annoyed. Andrew was associating himself with the business in an unusual manner—although he had a right to do so.

"If there's anything you wish to ask, I shall be glad to explain it."

"These underwritten shares—I suppose you're letting the fellows have them below par? Is that because you expect any difficulty in getting the money?"

"No; any project we're connected with will be taken up. Still, when you launch a good thing, it's policy to let a few members of the ring in at bottom and give them a share of the pickings."

Andrew frowned.

"It sounds like a bribe. But these pickings? They must come out of the shareholders' pockets."

"In the end, they do."

"Though I'm not a business man, it seems to me that capital put into shafts

and reducing plant stands a fair chance of being productive. That spent in starting the concern is largely wasted."

"We are spending less than usual. May I ask what your idea of the object of floating a company is?"

"Mine would be the expectation of getting a good dividend on the stock I took in it."

Leonard looked amused.

"Excellent, so far as it goes; but there's sometimes a little more than that."

Andrew sat silent a while. Then he said:

"I gather that this new scheme will be subscribed for because Allinson's guarantees it."

"It's impossible to guarantee a mining scheme, but, in a sense, you're right. The firm's name will count."

"Well," said Andrew, "I'd like to go to Canada and take some share in starting things—you see, I know the country. Then, as I suppose some of my money will be put into the business, you might, perhaps, make me a director. I'd be of no use in London, but I might do something in Canada."

Leonard was surprised, but the suggestion pleased him. The name of Andrew Allinson would have its influence on investors.

"It is not a bad idea," he said. "We'll see what can be done."

Andrew then changed the subject.

"How's business generally?"

"Pretty fair; we have made some profitable ventures in South America. You will remember my bringing Señor Piñola down? We made some money out of him."

"How?" Andrew asked without much interest. "The fellow had a dash of the nigger or Indian in him."

"He was Dictator Valhermosa's secret agent."

"Then you supported Valhermosa's administration during the unsuccessful rebellion?"

"We did. They wanted to re-arm the troops quietly in preparation; Piñola came over to buy new rifles and machine-guns, and as he couldn't pay ready money we arranged the matter. There was a risk, but we got some valuable concessions as security, and turned them over afterward to a German syndicate on excellent terms."

Andrew's face was grim when he looked up.

"And I gave Piñola two days' shooting instead of pitching him into the nearest bog! To think of Allinson's backing that brute Valhermosa is somewhat of a shock."

"What do you know about him?"

"A good deal. Warren, the naturalist who was with me in Canada, spent some time in his country and has friends there. He used to talk about the things he'd seen, and the memory of his stories makes me savage yet, because I believe them. I have other acquaintances who have lived in parts of the world that business men don't often reach. If you don't know how rubber's collected and minerals are worked in countries where there's a subject native population, you'd better not find out." Andrew broke into a harsh laugh and added:

"You didn't suspect that while the firm helped the Dictator, I, it's sleeping partner, gave Warren a check for the rebels, and I'd like to think that every cartridge my money bought accounted for one of the brutes who flog women to death and burn Indians at the stake when the revenue falls off."

Leonard looked grieved.

"I'm sorry to hear this; though it's possible that Warren was exaggerating. Anyway, we're out of it now. The deal was a matter of business—we couldn't be expected to know what was being done in the back-country, and after all it's no concern of ours."

Lighting another cigarette, Andrew smoked half of it in silence.

"The thing will hardly bear speaking of," he said finally, "and the fault is partly mine for not taking the interest in the firm I should have done."

He paused and looked Leonard steadily in the face.

"From what I've heard, those concessions may be good for another two or three years; and then, when Valhermosa's victims revolt again, if Allinson's can take any hand in the matter, it will be on the other side. Now we'll let the subject drop."

Leonard acquiesced with a tolerant gesture, though he was disconcerted by

Andrew's tone. It implied that his opinions would have to be considered in the future.

"By the way," Leonard said, "there's a matter I must mention, though it's delicate. I saw Judson this morning and he grumbled about the liberality you have shown of late."

"Judson's niggardliness has lost me one or two good tenants."

"It's possible; but he told me that you had let The Firs to Mrs. Olcott for ten pounds less than he could easily have obtained. As he's a talkative fellow and nothing is kept secret here, do you think you were wise in letting her have the place below its value?"

"You have been given a hint, Leonard. What do you know about Mrs. Olcott?"

"Nothing. The point is that nobody else seems to know anything. I merely wished to suggest that it might be well to be more cautious."

The color crept into Andrew's face.

"The next time you hear Mrs. Olcott mentioned you may say that her husband is a friend of mine, that he served with credit as captain through the recent war, and that he now holds a government post in West Africa, though the climate compelled him to leave his wife at home. Now, would you like a game of pool?"

Leonard said that he would be busy for a while, and when Andrew went out he leaned back in his chair to think. On the death of Andrew's father, he had been left in control of the business—though, as he had not brought much capital into the firm, his share of the profits was not large. There was a good deal to be paid over to members of the family and, getting tired of slow and steady progress, he had of late launched out into bold speculations.

Since his first advancement he had looked on his brother-in-law as an obstacle in his way, and had quietly strengthened his own position. He had made Andrew's brief business experience distasteful to him by seeing that the young man was kept busy at monotonous tasks that he could take no interest in. Afterward, when Andrew retired from the counting-house, he had missed no opportunity for suggesting that he was right in doing so, because he was obviously unfitted for a commercial career. Now and then he went farther and hinted that the young man was not gifted with much intelligence. It was, however, done cleverly; nobody realized that the impression that Andrew was something of a fool had originated with his brother-in-law, but in time it was generally held.

To some extent, Leonard was honest in what he had done. Andrew was undoubtedly not clever and Leonard believed that for him to have any say in matters would be detrimental to the firm. Now that he was inclined to assert his rights, it would be well to send him to Canada. This implied some risk, as there were matters connected with the mine which Leonard preferred to conceal, but it was unlikely that Andrew would make any undesirable discovery. However, it might be wise to give the family a reason for entrusting him with the post, and Leonard thought it could be supplied by making the most of his acquaintance with Mrs. Olcott. Having arrived at this conclusion, he dismissed the matter and busied himself with the prospectus.

III

A COUNCIL

Hot sunshine flooded the Ghyllside lawn, but there was a belt of shadow beneath a copper beech, where a family group had gathered. Leonard sat in a basket-chair, talking to Mrs. Fenwood, an elderly widow with an austere expression; his wife and Gertrude Wannop were whispering over their teacups; Wannop, red-faced and burly, stood beside Robert Allinson, a solemn-looking clergyman.

"We have been here half an hour and not a word has been said yet upon the subject everybody's itching to talk about. We're a decorous lot," Wannop remarked, surveying the others with amusement. "Personally, I should be glad if we were allowed to go home without its being broached. It's hardly the thing to discuss Andrew's shortcomings round his table."

"There are times when it's a duty to overcome one's delicacy," Robert re-

plied. "If I have been correctly informed, the matter demands attention. Hitherto the Allinsons have never given their neighbors cause to criticise their conduct."

"None of them? I seem to remember——"

"None of them," Robert interposed firmly. "There was once a malicious story about Arthur, but I am glad to say it was disproved. But this Mrs. Olcott, whom I haven't seen—I suppose she's attractive?"

Wannop smiled.

"Distinctly so; what's more, she has a forlorn and pathetic air which is highly fetching. Still, I'm convinced that there's no harm in her."

"A married woman living apart from her husband!" Robert exclaimed severely. "I understand that Andrew is at her house now, and I must confess that after walking some distance I feel hurt at his not being here to receive us."

"He didn't know you were coming," Wannop pointed out, and added with a roguish air: "We have all been young and I don't suppose you used to look the other way when you met a pretty girl; but I'll go bail Andrew only visits her out of charity. However, if you are determined to have your say, you may as well begin and get it over."

Robert left him and addressed Leonard in a formal tone.

"I am told that Andrew is going out to assist in the development of the new mine and wishes to be made a director. As a relative and a shareholder, may I ask if you consider him fit for the post?"

Leonard had been waiting for an opening, and he welcomed the inquiry.

"Andrew has every right to demand the position, which I could not refuse." He paused, for the next suggestion must be skillfully conveyed. "As it happens, his abilities hardly enter into the question. It is merely needful that we should have a representative on the spot to whom we can send instructions, and I dare say he will get a good deal of the fishing and shooting he enjoys. All matters of importance will be decided in London."

"Then I take it that his inexperience and ineptitude can do the company no harm?"

Leonard was grateful to him for so plainly expressing his meaning.

"Oh, no! Besides, I imagine that the change will be beneficial in several ways."

Glancing at the others, he knew that he had said enough. It would have been difficult for any of the family to cite a remark of his in open disparagement of his brother-in-law, though he had cunningly fostered their disbelief in him. His wife, however, was endowed with courage as well as candor.

"There is nothing to be gained by shutting one's eyes to the truth," she observed. "We all know that Andrew's visits to this woman are being talked about. What is more serious is that he induced her to come here, and let her have The Firs on purely nominal terms."

"Is it so bad as that?" Mrs. Fenwood, with a shocked look, turned to the clergyman, as if begging him to deal with the painful situation.

"The thing must be stopped, nipped in the bud," said Robert firmly. "I agree with Leonard that our infatuated relative should be sent to Canada at once."

Wannop smiled.

"It strikes me as fortunate that Andrew is willing to go."

"It's a favorable sign," said Mrs. Fenwood. "He may be struggling against the creature's influence, in which case it's our duty to assist him."

"That wasn't what I meant. I've a suspicion that we have fallen into a habit of underestimating Andrew's abilities and determination." Wannop looked hard at Leonard. "You are going to put him into a position of responsibility and teach him to use his power. Are you prepared for the possible consequences?"

Nobody paid much attention to this, and Leonard, after a moment's hesitation dismissed the matter. The Allinsons regarded Wannop as a thoughtless person whose moral code was somewhat lax. Nevertheless, he was shrewd and had read Andrew's character better than Leonard.

"If Andrew ever wishes to have his say in business matters, I should have neither the desire nor the authority to object," Leonard said.

"Then we may rest assured that everything will be done to facilitate his departure for Canada," Robert said decidedly.

A few minutes later Wannop left them. Crossing the lawn, he met Hilda in a shrubbery walk.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "I haven't seen you since we came."

"Florence found me an errand that kept me out of the way," said Hilda pointedly. "Now what have you and the others been talking about?"

"I mustn't betray a confidence," answered Wannop with twinkling eyes. "Still, I dare say you can guess."

"Of course! They were discussing my erring brother. Aren't they silly?"

"I think so. It's curious that you and I, whose opinions don't count for much, should differ with the rest."

Hilda gave him a grateful glance.

"But we are the ones who see most clearly. I have always felt that you are to be trusted."

He made her a humorous bow.

"I must try to deserve such confidence."

"Don't be foolish; this is serious. They mean well, but they're all wrong about Andrew. Of course, I make fun of him now and then, but I'm very fond of him. It's a mistake to think he's stupid—Leonard's responsible for it."

"I'll admit that something of the kind has occurred to me," Wannop said.

Hilda hesitated.

"Well," she said, "I have never had much confidence in Leonard, though the others think him perfect. I've an idea that all along he has been gently pushing Andrew aside, making him look silly, and undermining the influence he ought to have. Now he's sending him to Canada—I very much wonder why."

Wannop started.

"My dear, your suspicions go a trifle farther than mine. You may be right, though it's not nice to think so. But where does all this lead?"

"Andrew may need supporters who don't altogether believe in the immaculate Leonard some day. I think, if needful, he could count on us."

"And on nobody else?"

"Not until the others understood; and it would be hard to make them see."

"Uncommonly hard," Wannop admitted. "Well, Hilda, you and I will be allies. We can conspire together unsuspected, because we are the two who are not supposed to count—you because you're too young and charming. I because I haven't the fine moral fastidiousness and air of distinction that marks the Allinsons. But I'll let you into a secret—Gertrude's wavering in her ideas about Andrew: I'm perverting her."

"There's something I'd better tell you. I met Mrs. Olcott half an hour ago and I stopped and spoke. I like her—there isn't the least reason why I shouldn't—and I'm sorry for her. I know she feels being left alone, and we're going to be friends. Now if the others should try to make things unpleasant?"

"I imagine Robert means mischief."

"I was afraid of it," said Hilda. "Of course, he's as silly and unable to see things properly as an owl in daylight, but solemn stupid people often pass for being wise, and he might do harm. If he tries, can you stop him? I know Andrew would like it."

Wannop made a sign of rather dubious assent.

"As I'm unromantically stout, getting elderly, and devoid of personal charm, I might perhaps venture to interfere in this matter. After all, there's a sense in which Andrew is undoubtedly to blame. Why do you let him go to The Firs so often?"

"If I should give him a hint that people are talking, it would only make him angry. You know he really is slow at understanding, now and then."

They strolled back to the party, which soon afterward broke up, for although Hilda begged them to wait for dinner, nobody seemed anxious to meet Andrew.

Three weeks later Andrew sailed, and soon after he had done so Wannop

called one afternoon at The Firs, where he was received by Mrs. Olcott in the garden. He thought she looked harassed, but he had expected this.

"I believe you have met my wife," he began, taking the canvas chair she indicated.

"Yes," said Mrs. Olcott. "She called on me and, if I remember right, stayed five minutes."

This was not encouraging.

"You know my sister-in-law, Hilda, better?" Wannop ventured.

Mrs. Olcott's expression softened.

"That is true; I have reason to be grateful to her."

"Hilda is a very nice girl. I verily believe that we are fond of each other, and as I am more than double her age, she now and then favors me with her confidence. In fact, she suggested that I might be able to help you out of a difficulty."

His hostess studied him carefully. He was burly and looked hot after his walk, but he had a reassuring smile and his red face seemed to indicate good-nature. She was inclined to think that he could be trusted.

"It's about the house," she said. "I don't know where else to go and it looks as if I might be turned out."

That this should distress her hinted at some degree of poverty, and Wannop felt compassionate. She was young and inexperienced, and had been coldly treated by her neighbors.

"How is that?" he asked.

After a moment of irresolution Mrs. Olcott decided to tell him.

"Mr. Allinson arranged about the house. Perhaps I shouldn't have allowed this, but when he was wounded in the war my husband carried him out of reach of the Boer fire—and Mr. Allinson felt under obligation to—"

"Ah! Andrew ought to have made that clear. But wont you go on with the explanation?"

"Mr. Allinson told me that no papers were needed; I was to pay the rent to a man called Judson. He came here and said that there had been some mistake. The rent was ten pounds more and I must share the cost of the alterations, while the field adjoining, which must go with The Firs, would be another extra. When I declared I couldn't pay all this he said I was undoubtedly liable, but he could find another tenant who would take the house off my hands."

"I see a clerical finger in this pie," said Wannop half aloud, and smiled at his hostess. "I beg your pardon. I suppose you didn't know that this is Andrew Allinson's house."

Mrs. Olcott started and colored.

"I did not know. But if it is, I can't understand why his agent——"

"Somebody is back of him. Now we had better be candid. I venture to believe you can confide in me."

"What proof can I have of that? You are a connection of the Allinsons, who seem bent on persecuting me. Have they sent you here?"

"Hilda did," Wannop replied with quiet good-humor. "Perhaps I had better say that on some points she and I are not quite in accord with the rest of the family. I suppose Andrew promised your husband to look after you until his return?"

Mrs. Olcott agreed, for her suspicions about his errand had vanished. Wannop mused a few moments.

"I think you should stay here and fight it out until he comes back," he said. "After all, your neighbors are honest as far as they see, and you'll find them ready to make amends."

Mrs. Olcott's eyes sparkled, but she hesitated.

"I'm afraid I can't hold out. They have attacked me where I'm weakest."

"Will you leave the matter of the house to me? It can be put right."

"Why are you willing to take the trouble?"

Wannop laughed.

"For one thing, I enjoy putting a spoke in the parson's wheel; for another, Andrew made you a promise, and the Allinsons like to keep their word."

He got up and held out his hand.

"I'll have a talk with Mr. Judson. Show your courage and hold your ground. You'll be glad you did so by and by."

The next morning Wannop called at the agent's office in a neighboring town. He was shown into a dingy room, where an elderly man with spectacles received him with deference.

"I've been looking into accounts, Judson," Wannop began abruptly. "After deducting your commission and the cost of the repairs you agreed to, I find that the return on my property for the past year is small. Now I met Maxwell the other day and he hinted that it might be managed to better advantage."

The agent looked alarmed.

"I understood you didn't wish to put the screw on your tenants; and it isn't good policy."

"No," said Wannop, "I want to be fair. I don't think Andrew Allinson would wish any undue pressure put on his tenants either. As we talk over things now and then, I know his views."

Judson pondered this without answering, and Wannop resumed:

"My business and Andrew's should be worth a good deal to you, though Maxwell seemed to think that both could be improved."

"Maxwell couldn't get you a penny more than I have got," Judson declared. "I should be very sorry if you contemplated a change."

"I shouldn't do so without a strong reason. You look after the Reverend Robert Allinson's property, but your commission on it can't be large."

"It is not," said Judson, beginning to understand where the other's remarks led.

"Well," went on Wannop, "I saw Mrs. Olcott yesterday, and she mentioned the misunderstanding about her lease. I may tell you that Mrs. Wannop and Miss Allinson are friends of hers."

Judson was surprised, but decided that if he must offend either Wannop or the clergyman, it would better be the latter.

"Mr. Andrew called here in a hurry and said he had got a tenant for The Firs and I was to have some alterations made. He was driving, and as his horse was restive he ran out before we could talk over details."

Wannop thought this was correct, for Andrew was sometimes careless.

"Atkinson will take the field off your hands. It's not usual to charge a tenant with needful repairs; and you mustn't be hard on Mrs. Olcott about the rent. Perhaps you had better go over and put things straight with her."

Judson promised to do so and Wannop took out some papers.

"Here's a more important matter. I've decided to buy Bell's place, and you can see his agent and the architect as soon as convenient."

He rode away, knowing that his hints would be attended to. During the evening he met Hilda.

"I've seen Mrs. Olcott and Judson," he told her. "It's very unlikely that she'll have any more trouble about The Firs."

"That's splendid!" cried Hilda. "But how did you manage it?"

Wannop chuckled.

"My dear girl, an explanation isn't always desirable. When you know how a thing's done it spoils the trick."

"Oh, well," said Hilda, "it doesn't matter, but you have a suspiciously complacent look. One could imagine that you felt satisfied with yourself."

"There's some truth in that," Wannop laughed. "I feel that we have held our own against the more brilliant members of the family."

IV

THE LAKE OF SHADOWS

THE evening was gloomy and there was a boisterous onshore wind when Jake Carnally stood on a sawmill dump, looking out across the Lake of Shadows. Its troubled waters reflected the color of the leaden clouds above, though they were laced with tumbling foam, and short, white-topped waves broke angrily upon the sweating sawdust at Carnally's feet. The tall pines that rolled back from the beach had faded to a deep, somber hue; the distance was blurred and gray. The lake is a large one, stretching many leagues to the south, but it is strewn with forest-clad islets, and those inshore obstructed Carnally's view. On the nearest of them wisps of smoke drifted out from among the shadowy trunks, and an aromatic smell of burning cedar reached him across the spray-swept sound. Holiday-makers from Winnipeg had pitched a summer camp there.

Seeing nothing out on the lake, he turned and glanced past the tall iron chimney-stacks toward a row of pretty wooden houses beside the river mouth.

A moving cloud of sooty smoke floated above them, and he knew that a westbound train was pulling out of the station. Then a man came up to him.

"Why, Jake!" he cried. "You look as if you'd been up against it! When did you come down?"

Carnally smiled. He was tall, and sparely but strongly built. His kneeboots were dilapidated, his brown overalls badly torn.

"This afternoon," he answered. "Took the river for it with two of the boys, and a mighty tough time we had in getting through. Water was on the rock portages and we had to shove round through the bush. It didn't seem worth while getting out my glad rags, as I have to take the new boss up early to-morrow."

"Looks as if he'd got lost," said the other. "I guess you heard he left for Duck Island with two of the Company's roustabouts day before yesterday. They hadn't much grub with them, but he allowed he'd be back this morning."

"What did he go to Duck-Island for?"

"To prospect the fireclay bed. Seemed to think the Company might put up a smelter."

"It's early for that," said Carnally with a grin. "They've got to raise milling ore and pack it down first. I suppose you've seen him; what's he like? I don't even know his name."

"Big man, about your age. Kind of slow—thinks before he speaks, but for an English sucker he shows some sense. It's my notion he's a stayer."

"Were they river-jacks he took along?"

"Struck me as more like railroad shovelers, though they could paddle in smooth water. As there's a nasty sea running in the open, you'd better look for him. If those fellows wreck his canoe and he has to spend the night on an island with nothing to eat while you sit in the hotel, it's steep chances he fires you."

"I don't care two bits whether I get fired or no. The Rain Bluff Mining Company is the meanest business proposition I've ever run up against, except the Mappin Transport, which is worse. All the same, I guess I'll have to go. If you're going back to the hotel, you might tell the boys to bring my canoe and blankets."

The man promised to do so, and Carnally sat down out of the wind to smoke until the craft arrived. He was tired by an arduous journey. Now he must launch out again and paddle, perhaps all night, in search of his missing chief.

The canoe came lurching to the foot of the dump, and as there was a chance of swamping her alongside it, Carnally ran out on a treacherous drift-log and sprang on board. A man untrained to river work would have upset the craft or gone through her bottom, but Carnally came down safely and seized the steering paddle.

"This is rough on us, boys, but it has to be done," he said. "Shove her straight out for the gap."

His companions were wiry, dark-faced and dark-haired men whose French-Canadian blood had in it a strain of the Indian—hard to beat at river work or travel through the wilds. Toiling strenuously, they drove the light craft over the short seas, with the spray whipping their faces and the foam washing in at the bows. Now and then they made no headway for a minute or two against a savage gust, but when it lulled they slowly forged on again, though they knew that to find a canoe among the maze of islands was as difficult a task as could be set them. When they labored out into the more open spaces of the lake as dusk was closing in, Carnally roused himself to keen alertness. Here the waves were dangerously high and an error of judgment might involve a capsize.

As it happened, the craft they sought was battling with the breeze some distance offshore, and Andrew Allinson, kneeling astern, glanced anxiously to leeward when he dared take his eyes off the threatening seas ahead. They rolled down on the canoe, ridged with foam, and it needed quick work with the paddle to help her over them. To make things worse, she was half full of water, and nobody could spare a hand to bale it out. Andrew was not an expert at canoeing, but he had once made a journey up the Canadian waterways and had

been a yachtsman at home; and when the breeze freshened and the waves got steeper it had become evident that neither of his companions was capable of managing the craft in broken water. He had accordingly taken the helmsman's post and after running before the sea for the greater part of the day without a meal, had discovered at dusk a long ridge of rocks and pines looming up not far ahead.

They lost it in the growing darkness, for Andrew knew the risk of trying to land among big boulders on which the surf was breaking. He must paddle out and clear the end of the island, in the hope of finding a harbor on its sheltered side; but it still lay to lee of him, and breaking waves and savage gusts drove them nearer the threatening shore. He was wet through and very tired; one galled hand bled freely. So far as the other two could judge, however, he was still serene, and now and then his voice reached them, hoarse but cheerful:

"A bit of a lull, boys; drive her at it in the smooth!"

He could see nothing to leeward except flying spray, but he was not deceived by the emptiness. The island must be close to them. He did not think he could clear it, but he meant to fight until the last moment.

"Put some weight into the stroke! We'll make a few yards now!" he cried.

"Hold on!" shouted one of the others. "What's that?"

A hail reached them faintly and, when they answered, rose again, a little nearer.

"Are you the Rain Bluff crowd?"

"Sure we are!"

"Then follow us!" cried a voice, as the blurred shape of a canoe appeared ahead. "Don't let her sag to lee; keep right astern!"

They got the canoe round, stern to sea, in some peril of being overturned, and drove away at a furious pace, with the other craft lurching before them through the spray. In a few minutes shadowy pines appeared, then a strip of foam-swept beach, at which Andrew glanced anxiously. He could not turn back now; the dark, froth-edged seas drove him on, but in a few more minutes the end of the beach slipped past and a narrow strip of water with pines about it opened up. They ran in; the wild lurching ceased, and they paddled through smooth water until the craft ahead gently took the beach. Andrew now realized that he had mistaken two islands for one, and was in the sound between them. It was very dark among the trees when he came ashore, but he heard one of the strangers asking for the boss, and answered him.

"Sit down out of the wind while we make a fire and get supper," said the other. "I understood that your grub might be running out, so we brought some along."

The man's voice sounded familiar, but Andrew was too tired and cold to exert his memory. Finding a sheltered place among the rocks, he waited until he was called. Then he saw that a fire had been lighted, a shelter of bark and branches made, and a meal which looked very inviting laid out beside it. All had been done with remarkable neatness as well as celerity, and Andrew recognized the experienced bushman's skill. Then the firelight fell on his pilot's face, and he started.

"Carnally, by all that's wonderful!" he cried.

Carnally gazed at him in astonishment for a moment or two, and then his expression grew reserved.

"Yes," he said, "that's my name."

"Then you ought to remember me!"

"Sure! You're Lieutenant Allinson, late of the Imperial Yeomanry, and, I understand, in charge of the Rain Bluff mining operations. I'm the mine boss' assistant, at your service."

It was the greeting of a subordinate to his superior, and Andrew was puzzled. He owed a good deal to the man and they had treated each other as comrades in South Africa when, as had happened once or twice, the accidents of the campaign had enabled them to sink the difference of rank. Now it was the inferior who obviously meant to bear their relative positions in mind; and that is not the Canadian employee's usual attitude toward his master. The man he had known and liked as Sergeant Carnally had rather pointedly declined to see that he wished to shake hands.

"I'm very glad to run across you again

and to find that we shall be working together," Andrew said.

"Mutual pleasure," Carnally replied. "Sit right down; supper will be getting cold."

The united party gathered round the fire, sharing the meal, but Andrew failed in his attempts to lead Carnally into friendly talk. The man answered readily, but he would not continue a conversation and there was a strange reserve about him. Indeed, Andrew was glad when the meal was over; and soon afterward he lay down, wrapped in damp blankets, and went to sleep.

The next morning the wind had fallen, the lake lay shimmering with light under a cloudless sky, and they paddled smoothly between islands covered with dusky pines whose reflections quivered in the glassy water, until they reached the little wooden town. When they landed, Andrew touched Carnally's arm.

"Will you have supper with me tonight at my hotel?" he asked.

"Sorry I can't," said Carnally. "Got to meet a man at the other place. If it will suit, I'll come over during the evening."

Andrew told him to do so, though he was piqued. He took supper with Mappin, the head of a transport and contracting company with which it seemed he was to have business relations. Mappin, he thought, was about thirty years of age—a powerfully built man of city type, with sleek black hair and a fleshy but forceful face. His manner to the waitresses jarred on Andrew, for he gazed at one who was pretty with insolent admiration, and bullied another who was nervous and plain. In conversation he was brusque and opinionated; but Andrew was soon convinced that he possessed marked business ability. After supper they sat smoking on a wooden balcony while the clean fragrance of the pines and the murmur of running water filled the cooling air. Andrew, who was by no means oversensitive, was unpleasantly affected by the way Mappin bit off the end of his cigar. He had large and very white teeth, but his lower lip was unusually thick, and there was something suggestive of an animal in the trifling action which made it repulsive, though on the whole the fellow was coarsely handsome.

"I noticed a very pretty wooden house on one of the islands we passed this morning," Andrew said. "Whom does it belong to?"

"You must mean Frobisher's place. Calls it a summer camp, though it's fitted up luxuriously. He's from across the frontier and a bit of a sport; the Americans are coming north largely now for shooting and fishing. However, as he'll be here soon, you're sure to meet him."

"A pleasant man?"

"He can be very dry and you'd find it hard to get ahead of him; but he's hospitable, and you can't get a dinner like he puts up out of Montreal. I'll take you across some evening; he's by way of being a friend of mine. Then Geraldine Frobisher's a picture: figure like classical sculpture, face with each feature molded just as it ought to be. It's a feast for the eyes to watch that girl walk."

Andrew had occasionally listened to similar descriptions of young women, but he resented something in Mappin's appreciation of Miss Frobisher. It struck him as wholly physical and gross. "Well," he said curtly, "I'll think over the matters we have talked about and let you know my decision."

Mappin looked surprised, as if he had taken Andrew's assent to his suggestions for granted.

"No hurry, but you'll have to write," he said. "As you're going up to the mine, I'll pull out on the Toronto express in the morning. And now there are some letters I must get off by the mail."

Andrew was not sorry to have him go; and when Carnally entered the balcony a few minutes later he was struck by the contrast between the two men. The bushman was lean and wiry; there was a lithe grace in his quick movements, and a hint of the ascetic in his keen, bronzed face. One could imagine that this man's body was his well-trained servant and would never become his pampered master.

"Sit down, Jake," said Andrew, determined to penetrate his reserve. "Take a cigar. Now we got on pretty well in the hospital and the prison camp, didn't we?"

Carnally's eyes twinkled when he had lighted his cigar.

"That's so; I wasn't in your squadron then. Besides, you've got moved up since; you're colonel now."

"In a sense, I am. I don't know how you rank yet, but I have some say in choosing my officers. But we'll drop this fencing. Why did you hold off last night when I meant to be friendly?"

Carnally considered before he answered.

"I know my place; you're my boss. If my attitude didn't please you, tell me what you expect."

"I'll try. To begin with, when I speak as the Company's representative, I must have what I want done."

"That's right. I'm agreeable, so long as I hold my job."

"Don't you mean to hold it?"

"That depends. I haven't made up my mind yet."

"Then I want a man that I can rely on to help me through any trouble I meet," Andrew went on. "One that I can consult, when needful, with confidence."

"It's quite likely that we might look at things from a different point of view."

Andrew was frankly puzzled by his companion's manner. His reserve and lack of response were not in accordance with what he knew of Carnally.

"Well," he asked, "what are you going to do?"

"We might give the thing a trial. Do you know much about mining?"

"Nothing," said Andrew. "I'll admit that to you. I don't think you'll take advantage of it."

"But how did you come to be sent over in charge of the mine if you don't know your work?"

"I'm a director of the Company, and a good deal of the family money has gone into it."

Carnally looked grave at this, and sat silent a few moments studying his companion.

"Did you have anything to do with fixing up things on this side?" he asked.

"No. My brother-in-law, Hathersage, came over and made all arrangements. I'm rather ignorant about them."

"Then he didn't take you much into his confidence about this mining proposition?"

"No; I can't say that he did."

"And you expect a fair return on your money and mean to see that your friends who have invested don't get left? That's all?"

"Of course; I've no claim to anything else."

"That," said the Canadian dryly, "is a point on which there might be some difference of opinion. You want the shareholders to make a good thing?"

"Yes. The firm has backed this mine; I believe the name helped to float the scheme. That makes me responsible to the people who found the money."

Carnally gave him a long, searching glance, and his expression changed.

"Well," he said with an air of quiet resolve, "I guess I'll have to see you through."

When Carnally left a half-hour later he met a storekeeper of the town outside the hotel.

"You're looking serious, Jake," the man remarked. "Been with your new boss, I heard. What do you think of him?"

"Well," Carnally answered gravely, "it's my idea he's white."

"Then you're not going to quit, as you talked of doing?"

"No, sir; I guess the new boss and I will pull along."

"If he's square, why's he working with Mappin and the other grafters?"

Carnally laughed.

"That's a point I don't understand yet. But it's my notion there's going to be *less* graft about this Rain Bluff proposition than you fellows think."

V

FIRST SUSPICIONS

ANDREW and Carnally knelt in the bottom of their canoe, plying the paddle, while a big half-breed stood upright, using an iron-shod pole when the nature of the bottom permitted it. The stream ran strong against them; they were wet, and had laboriously forced a passage between big boulders, up rapids, and a few slacker reaches, since early morning. A fine drizzle obscured their view, but so far as they could see, the prospect was far from cheerful. Ahead, stony

ledges broke the froth-streaked surface of the flood; the pines were green by the waterside, growing with vigor where they could find a hold among the rocks, but farther back they were small and tangled, leaning athwart each other, stripped of half their branches. Some had been blackened by fire, and there were unsightly avenues of tottering charred logs. The picture was dreary and desolate.

"Isn't it getting time for supper?" Andrew asked as they rounded a bend in the river.

"Not quite. Besides, there's a Mappin camp not far ahead, and if we can make it we'll be saved some trouble."

Andrew nodded, for he had discovered that cooking supper and arranging a shelter for the night is a tiresome business when one is wet and worn out by a long day's journey.

"Then we'd better go on. I suppose Mappin's boys are road-making?"

"Yes," said Carnally. "Transport is going to be one of the Company's biggest expenses. Though the river is available, it pays to cut out the worst of the portages. Packing ore over a mile or two of slippery rock costs money, and the river makes a big bend full of rapids a little higher up."

"I remember now. The road is to go straight across by the old fur-trade traverse, and when it's finished we'll put wagons on. From the looks of the country it will be an undertaking."

"Sure!" agreed Carnally. "Still, if you get it done at a reasonable figure, it ought to pay."

"It has struck me that we're giving a good deal of work to Mappin. Ever since we left the landing we have come across his men."

"It's usual to put jobs you're unable to attend to into a contractor's hands," Carnally replied.

The men were now on more friendly terms, but Andrew had noticed that his companion was generally content with answering questions and seldom made a suggestion. Moreover, he had an idea that Carnally was quietly studying him.

They paddled on for another half-hour, and then a heavy, booming report rang out of the mist ahead. It was followed by a succession of heavy crashes that might have been made by falling rock, and Carnally turned the canoe's head toward the bank.

"Giant-powder," he explained. "The camp's near by, and the boys haven't quit for supper yet."

On landing, they left the half-breed to look after the canoe, while they followed a narrow track through a belt of dismal, tottering pines. A low log building stood in a clearing, and beyond it the new road led up a ravine with rocky slopes. In one place they had been violently rent, for the ground was strewn with great fragments over which a cloud of dust still floated. A group of men stood a short distance away, as if afraid to approach nearer, and their attitude suggested that something unusual was going on. As Andrew hurried toward them, two more appeared, staggering out of the dust and vapor in a curious drunken manner, and dragging along a third. His limpness and the slack way his arms hung down were unpleasantly suggestive.

"What's happened? Has he been hit by a stone?" Andrew asked the nearest man; but the tall, light-haired fellow shook his head as if he did not understand.

Andrew questioned another, with no better success, and then noticed two others moving cautiously toward the dust and smoke. Their care seemed uncalled for, as the explosion had already occurred; but it was obvious that somebody was lying in need of assistance among the stones brought down by the shot, and Andrew ran forward.

Plunging into the dust he noticed that it had an acrid smell, and a moment later he felt dizzy. Then he was conscious of an intolerable headache and a feeling of nausea. He could hardly see; he was losing control of his limbs; but he struggled on and, overtaking the others, helped to drag out an unconscious man. Then he sat down, gasping, and found it difficult to prevent himself from slipping off the stone.

"I'm sorry," said Carnally, coming up at that moment. "I stopped behind to talk to one of the boys, and as I didn't know what you were doing I couldn't warn you. You'll feel better presently."

"What is it?" Andrew asked. "What

knocked me and the other fellows over?"

"Giant-powder gas. Some kinds are worse than others, though they're all poisonous. Sit quiet while it works off."

After a while Andrew's head got clearer and the pain less severe, and then Carnally took him to the log building, where supper was ready. Finding him a seat at the end of a long table, Carnally handed him a pannikin of strong tea. Andrew felt better when he had drunk it, and he began to look about.

The building was a wretched, decrepit hovel. The logs were small and sagged in the middle; one could hardly stand up in the room; and the rain that had run in through the leaking roof stood in pools on the earthen floor. The bunks consisted of two split-board ledges against the walls, littered with dirty, damp blankets and miry clothing which filled the place with a sour, unpleasant smell. The long table which ran up the middle of the one room was crowded with unkempt men, eating voraciously and talking in what Andrew presently recognized as Norwegian, though he thought he caught a word or two of German occasionally. A very neat Chinaman laid a plate before him; but, hungry as he had been before he breathed the powder fumes, he revolted from the food. The greasy pork smelt rancid; the potatoes were rotten.

"I couldn't eat this if I were feeling fit," he said disgustedly.

Carnally called the Chinaman, who took the plate away and substituted a piece of pie and one or two desiccated apricots. This was better, and Andrew ate a little, although he suspected that there was something wrong with the lard used in the pie, and the fruit was small and worm-eaten.

"Let's get out," he said. "I don't think I'm dainty, but this place is too much for me."

Leaving the building, they sat down at the foot of a rock which kept the drizzle off them. Andrew breathed the clean fragrance of the pines with delight.

"This is a great improvement," he declared. "Will you tell Lucien to pitch our tent where there's shelter?"

"As you wish," said Carnally. "I had figured on our sleeping and getting breakfast in the shack."

"Heavens, no!"

Andrew lighted his pipe.

"I've recovered enough to feel curious. How did the accident happen? The men who use it must know that fumes of giant-powder are dangerous; why didn't they wait?"

"It might be better if I let the man responsible explain."

Carnally beckoned the foreman.

"Mr. Allinson wants to know why you didn't keep the boys back until the fumes had cleared."

"I gave them about the usual time; but it looks as if I'd cut it too fine. Guess the damp and there being no wind stopped the gas from getting away. Besides, we're not using a high-grade powder."

"But if there was any doubt, couldn't you have given them another few minutes?" Andrew asked.

The foreman smiled.

"I had to hold up a dozen men while that shot was fired, and the rain has kept us back lately. Now a boss contractor knows how many yards of dirt a man can move in a day and how much rock you ought to shift with a stick of giant-powder. It's easy figuring how far the road should be pushed ahead for the money spent, and I've got to keep up to schedule."

Andrew studied the man. He looked hard, capable of getting the most out of his subordinates, but not brutal.

"Then no allowances are made?" he suggested.

"No, sir; not on a Mappin job. You have to put through the work or get!"

He left them and Andrew turned to Carnally.

"Is the shack these fellows live in better or worse than the average?" he asked.

"Worse. The boys are often quite comfortably fixed."

"What about the food?"

"You can judge for yourself," Carnally drawled. "It's the meanest hash I ever struck; and you want to remember it's no fault of the cook's. The stuff is mighty bad when a Chinaman can't dish it up fit to eat."

"Are the men boarded free?"

"Not much! They pay about six dollars a week; and it's enough. Now as a rule an employer doesn't look for a profit on the grub; taking camps all round, the boys get pretty good value for their money."

"Then it looks as if this one were an exception," said Andrew. "Why do they employ so many Scandinavians?"

"They get them cheap: catch them newly landed, anxious for a job, before they find out what they ought to have. A dollar looks big after a *kroner*. That's my notion, but we'll see if it's right." He called a Canadian workman. "What would you fix a roadmaker's wages at, Jim?"

"You ought to know. A good chopper and shoveler would get up to two-fifty, so long as he was west of cleared Ontario."

"Two dollars and a half a day," Carnally repeated to Andrew in emphasis, and addressed the man again: "What are you making now?"

"Dollar-seventy-five. I was cleaned out when I took the job. These blamed Dutchmen get one-fifty. The Mappin crowd's the meanest I've ever been up against."

"That leaves them three dollars a week for clothing and all expenses," Andrew observed, when the workman went away. "Considering what things cost in Canada, it isn't a great deal. Mappin seems a hard master. Do you know anything about him?"

"He's a smart man," said Carnally with a smile. "I met him for the first time when I hired out with your Company, but I heard that he hadn't a dollar a few years ago." He paused and added: "In fact, I've wondered where he got the capital to finance this job."

When they moved off to the camp which the half-breed had pitched, Andrew sat thoughtfully smoking outside the tent while the mist gathered thicker about the dripping pines and the roar of the river rang in his ears. He had been unfavorably impressed by Mappin, and had since learned that he treated his workmen with marked injustice; indeed, he had suffered in person from the fellow's greed. Andrew felt that a Company of which he was a director ought not to make a profit by trickery and oppression; but that was taking something for granted, for he had not ascertained that the Rain Bluff Company received the benefit. He must reserve the question for future consideration.

"Jake," he said at last to Carnally, "is there any reason why the Company shouldn't do its own transport work?"

"I don't know of any. You would have to let Mappin get through with his contracts first."

"Of course. What I mean is, could we do it as cheaply as he does and pay regulation wages?"

"It would take some figuring to answer that. Speaking without the book, you ought to do the work at the contractor's prices and have a profit. He must make one; and you can buy plant and tools on as good terms as he can."

"That's obvious. Then, on the whole, it ought to pay the Company?"

"What do you mean by the Company?"

"Well, the shareholders."

"It might pay—them," said Carnally with suggestive emphasis.

Andrew smoked his pipe out before he answered.

"I'll consider it when I've a little more to go on. It strikes me that I'm learning things. And now I think I'll get to sleep; my head's aching."

He lay down on a bed of spruce twigs and soon sank into restful slumber, but Carnally sat a while in the tent door, watching the dark river roll by. Allinson evidently meant to make him his confidential adviser, and he felt his responsibility.

VI

DREAM MINE

THE next morning the party broke camp, and after toiling hard with pole and paddle reached, toward evening, a forest-shrouded gorge through which the flood swept furiously. A quarter of a mile ahead, steep rocks pent in the raging water, which was veiled in spray; but nearer at hand the stream widened into a pool at which Andrew gazed with misgivings. Evidently Carnally meant to cross it. A wall of crag formed one bank; the opposite beach was strewn

with massy boulders, over which the pine branches stretched; and in between there ran a great wedge-shaped track of foam. No canoe, Andrew thought, could live through that tumult of broken water; but it ran more slackly near the boulder bank, and a short distance higher up an angry eddy swung back, close inshore, to the head of the pool, where it joined the main downward rush. At the junction a spur of rock ran out into the wild side-swirl of the flood. Shut in as it was by dripping pines; the place had a forbidding look.

"It strikes me that the Company will find carrying up its stores and plant very costly work," Andrew remarked, as they rested in an eddy behind a stone. "I'm beginning to understand why Leonard asked for so much capital. My idea is that we'll have to do some preliminary reducing on the spot to save mineral transport."

Carnally nodded. For a novice in such matters, Allinson was showing an unusual grasp of details.

"It's a question of the quality of the ore. In the North you must have a high-grade product that can be handled at a profit in small quantities. It doesn't pay to work rock that carries a low percentage of metal."

"What grade of stuff are we turning out? I've been unable to learn anything about it since I saw the results of the first assays."

"So far, the Company hasn't got up much ore: the boys have been kept busy at development work. But you'll be able to judge for yourself shortly, and we had better get on. There's a slack along the edge of the spur at the head of the pool which we ought to make, and it will save us some trouble in portaging. I'll land you if you'd rather, but I want a hand, and Lucien must give us a lift by tracking."

"If you can take the canoe up, I'll go with you," said Andrew quietly.

They headed for the boulder beach, where they landed the half-breed. He made a line fast to the craft and went up-stream with the end of it, while Carnally thrust the canoe out and, with Andrew's help, forced her up against the current, aided by the line. It was arduous work. The foam stood high about the bows; eddies swirling up from the rough bottom swung them to and fro and, although they strained every muscle, now and then brought them to a standstill. Angry waves broke on board freely, and Andrew realized that if Lucien lost his footing or slackened his efforts the line would be torn from him and they would be swept back to the tail of the pool. This, however, would be better than being sucked into the cataract close outshore, which would no doubt result in the canoe's capsizing. At last they reached a spot where they must stem the main rush, which swung in nearer the bank.

"Can we get through there?" Andrew asked breathlessly.

"I'll try," said Carnally. "If we fail, I guess you'll have to swim."

Andrew said nothing, but the swollen veins rose on his forehead as he strained upon his pole. Frothing water broke into the canoe; Lucien was knee-deep in the foam, braced tensely against the drag of the line. Spray lashed their hot faces, and the air was filled with the roar of the torrent. For nearly a minute they hung stationary, their strength taxed to the utmost, the pole-shoes gripping the bottom. Then they moved a foot or two, and the work was a little easier when they next dipped the poles. They made a few yards. With a cry to the half-breed, Carnally loosed the line, and they shot forward up-stream with a back-eddy. It swirled about them in curious green upheavals, streaked with lines of foam, and they sped with it past boulder and shingle at a furious pace. This was exhilarating; but when steep rocks dropped to the water Andrew glanced anxiously toward the white confusion where the eddy reunited with the downward stream. Its descent was not to be thought of, but he could see no alternative except being dashed against the crag.

Carnally, however, did not seem disturbed. He knelt in the stern, his eyes fixed ahead, quietly dipping the steering paddle, for they had laid down the poles.

"Use all your strength when I give the word," he said.

They slid on, a tall, projecting spur of rock drawing nearer, with furious

waves leaping down-stream a yard or two outshore of it. It seemed to Andrew that destruction surely awaited them. The turmoil grew closer; the rock was only a yard or two away; in another few moments the bow of the canoe would plunge into the tumbling foam. Then came a cry from Carnally:

"Now, with your right! Shoot her in!"

Andrew felt the stout paddle bend and afterward thought he had never made a stronger effort. The bow swung inshore; the rock unexpectedly fell back, and as they drove past its end a narrow basin opened up. The next moment they had entered it and, gliding forward, grounded on a gravelly bank. A man scrambled down a ledge and helped them to drag out the canoe.

"I've been watching you; didn't think you would make it," he said. "The stream's stronger than usual. Come along to my camp; I'll put you up tonight."

"Thanks," responded Carnally. "This is Mr. Allinson, of the Rain Bluff Mine." He turned to Andrew. "Mr. Graham, from the Landing."

Andrew saw that the man was studying him with quiet interest. Graham was elderly; his hair was gray, and his face and general appearance indicated that he led a comfortable, domestic life. Andrew supposed he was in business, but when they reached his camp he recognized that it had been laid out by a man with some knowledge of the wilds.

Graham gave them a supper of gray trout and bannocks and they afterward sat talking while the half-breed went fishing. The rain had ceased, though the mist still drifted heavily down the gorge, and the aromatic smell of woodsmoke mingled with the scent of the pines. Somewhere in the shadows a loon was calling, its wild cry piercing through the roar of water.

"A rugged and beautiful country," Graham remarked. "Is this your first visit to it, Mr. Allinson?"

"No," Andrew replied. "I was once some distance north, looking for caribou. I'm glad of an opportunity for seeing it again. It gets hold of one."

"So you know that; you have felt the pull of the lonely North! Curious how it draws some of us, isn't it?"

"Have you been up there?"

"Oh, yes; as a young man I served the Hudson Bay. I've been through most of the barrens between Churchill and the Mackenzie. Perhaps that's the grimmest, hardest country white men ever entered; but it's one you can't forget."

"It's undoubtedly hard," said Andrew. "We scarcely reached the fringe of it, but I was dressed in rags and worn very thin when we struck Lake Manitoba. I suppose you live at the Landing, now?"

"I've been there twenty years; built my house myself when there was only a shack or two and a Hudson Bay store. The railroad has changed all that."

"Mr. Graham is treasurer for the sawmill," Carnally explained.

"Didn't you find it tamer than serving the fur company?" Andrew asked.

A curious smile crept into Graham's eyes.

"One can't have everything, Mr. Allinson. I've been content, a willing slave of the desk, only seeing the wilds for a week or two in summer. But I've thought I might make another trip before I get too old."

"I think I understand," Andrew replied. "If I've a chance, I'm going before I return home. There's so much up yonder that impresses me—the caribou, the timber wolves, the lake storms, and the break-up of the rivers in the spring. What a tremendous spectacle the last must be!— six-foot ice, piled up in wild confusion, thundering down the valleys. I've only followed the track of it in summer, but I've seen the wreckage of rubbed-out buttes and islands, and boulders smashed to rubble."

"It is grand," said Graham quietly.

"I wonder if you'd mind telling Mr. Allinson about the silver lode you found?" Carnally suggested. "I guess he'd be interested."

Graham needed some persuasion before he began his tale.

"It happened a long time ago and I seldom mention it now; in fact, I'll confess that the lode is looked upon as a harmless illusion of mine. My friends call it my Dream Mine. When I was

a young man I was stationed at a Hudson Bay factory about four hundred miles north of here and was despatched with two half-breeds and a canoe to carry stores to a band of Indians. No doubt you know that the great Company held sovereign authority over the North for a very long time, and the Indians depended on it for their maintenance. Well, we set off with the canoe, paddling and portaging up rivers and across the height of land, towards the south."

"Then you were working across country toward the headwaters of this river," Andrew remarked.

"We didn't get so far, but I did my errand, and one day when crossing a divide we nooned beside a little creek. As I filled the kettle I noticed something peculiar about the pebbles and picked up a few. They were unusually heavy and dully lustrous, which made me curious. Following the creek back, I found a vein of the same material among the rocks. I filled a small bag with specimens and took the bearings of the spot, though we had to get on without loss of time because the rivers would soon be freezing up. On reaching the fort I showed the agent the specimens. I can remember his look of disgust. He was a grim old Scot.

"'Just pebbles; I'm no saying but they might be pretty,' he remarked, and opening the door threw them out. 'Ye'll think nae mair o' them. The Company's no collecting precious stones, and ye should ken a souter's expected to stick till his last.'"

"I wonder," said Andrew, "which of you hailed from the Border?"

"Both," laughed Graham. "He was a Hawick terry; I was born between Selkirk and Ettrick shaws. The official language of the Company was Caledonian; but that's beside the point. I was young enough to feel hurt, though I knew my man and how staunch he was to the Company's policy."

"What was that policy?"

"The North for the Hudson Bay. As you know, in Canada all minerals belong to the Crown. The first discoverer can claim the right to work them, so long as he complies with the regulations."

"I see," said Andrew. "Prospectors might scare away animals with skins worth a good deal of silver. But I didn't mean to interrupt you."

"A day or two later I thought I would look for the stones, but there had been a heavy fall of snow and I found only a few of them. I never got the rest, because I was away when the thaw came. About a year later I was sent back with the same companions to the band of Indians. It was winter; they were starving, and the agent recognized their claim. There was no oppression of native races in the Hudson Bay domains; not a yard of the Indians' land was taken from them, and drink could not be bought at the factories. The Company offered them a higher standard of comfort if they would work for it, but there was no compulsion. If they found English guns and stores and blankets better than the articles they had used, the agents were there to trade."

Graham paused with a smile.

"I'm discursive, Mr. Allinson, but I've a grievance against the Hudson Bay, and I want to be fair."

"I'm interested," Andrew declared. "It's a clean record for a commercial monopoly, considering how cocoa, rubber, and one or two other things, are often procured."

"We reached the Indian camp, handed over the supplies, and started back, with rations carefully weighed out to see us through. In winter starvation stalks one closely across the northern wilds. Now I had meant to visit the creek where I'd found the stones, but there was the difficulty that, as the Indians had changed their location, it would mean a longer trip. I couldn't rob the starving trappers of anything that had been sent them, and I must make our provisions cover an extra three or four days. There was a danger in this, because an unexpected delay might be fatal, and the dogs were already in poor condition. I faced the risk. We set off, the sledge running heavily over soft snow, and we reached the neighborhood of the creek in a raging blizzard, and camped for twenty-four hours. I could not find the creek; it was impossible to wait, and we went on through the bitterest weather I have

known. Gales and snowstorms dogged our steps all the way to the fort and we reached it, starving, four days late. One of the half-breeds had a badly frozen foot and I'll carry a memento of that march for the rest of my life."

Graham held up his left hand, which was short of two fingers.

"The result of a small ax cut and putting on a damp mitten, when we were near the creek."

"That put an end to your prospecting?"

"It did. I think the agent suspected me, for he took care that I was not sent in that direction again, and during the next year I left the Company's service. I kept the stones and after some time took them to an American assayer. He found them rich in lead and silver, which are often combined, and his estimate of the value of the matrix rock startled me. It was beyond anything I had imagined."

"Then there's a fortune awaiting exploitation beside that creek," exclaimed Andrew. "Did you do nothing about it?"

Graham smiled at him.

"I was married then, Mr. Allinson, a clerk in a small sawmill. What could I do? Stories of such strikes in the wilderness are common, and I had nothing but two or three bits of stone to show a capitalist. The country's difficult to traverse; it would have needed a well-equipped party to carry up stores and haul a canoe over the divides. In winter, provisions and sledge dogs could be obtained only from the Hudson Bay agents. The Company had to be reckoned with, and it was too strong for me."

"They couldn't have forbidden you to prospect in their territory."

"Oh, no; after all, it belongs to Canada. But their agents could refuse me the assistance and supplies I couldn't do without. It was impossible to hire an Indian guide or packer without their consent. If I'd been able to raise a thousand dollars, I might have beaten them; but that was out of the question."

"You tried, I've no doubt?"

"I spent a year's savings on a visit to Montreal and made the round of the banks and financiers' offices. Here and there a man listened with some interest, but nobody would venture five dollars on the project."

"And then?" said Andrew.

"I gave up all idea of developing the mine. I had two children to bring up; my salary was small. From the beginning, my wife made light of my discovery—I dare say she feared I might go back to the North—the children as they grew up took her view, and my silver mine became a joke among us. For twenty years I've led a happy, domestic life; but I've never forgotten the lode and I've thought of it often the last year or two. My girl is teaching; the boy has got a post, and I have a few dollars accumulating in the bank."

Graham, breaking off, filled his pipe and laughed softly before he went on.

"That's my story, Mr. Allinson; but perhaps it isn't finished yet. I may take the trail again some day, but it will have to be soon. The North is a hard country, and I'm getting old."

Andrew was moved. Loving adventure as he did, he could imagine what Graham's self-denial had cost him while he cheerfully carried out his duty to his family.

"Prospecting would no doubt be easier now?" he suggested.

"Much easier," said Graham. "The railroad has opened up the country, and the Company finds miners very good customers. Only, when you get back a short distance from the track, the North is still unsubdued. To grapple with its snow and ice, its rapids and muskegs, is mighty tough work."

They talked about other matters, until the chilly mist, gathering thicker round the camp, drove them into the tent.

VII

THE AMATEUR MINER

It was afternoon, and hot sunshine poured down into the little valley. Andrew stood at the foot of a low range, looking about with keen interest. The strip of level ground between rock and river was strewn with small fir stumps, among which lay half-burned logs and branches. On the edge of the clearing

stood two log shacks and a smith's shop, with an unsightly heap of empty cans, broken boots and discarded clothing in front of them. A bank of shattered stone stretched toward the stream, and on a scarped slope of the hillside where the rocks shone a warm pink there was a black hole. A stream of water flowing out of it ran down a trench. This was the Rain Bluff Mine. Andrew felt disappointed. There was not much to show for the capital that had been subscribed. He supposed, however, that the pieces of machinery which lay in disorder about the waterside were expensive, and he meant to ascertain their cost.

"Why. don't they get those things fitted up and working?" he asked Carnally, who stood near him.

"They're not complete. We're waiting until the Mappin people bring the rest of them."

Andrew pointed to several stacks of small logs.

"I suppose those are props? You seem to use a good many. Do you cut them on the spot?"

"The Mappin boys do. The Company pays for them by the foot."

"It strikes me that Mappin's doing a good deal of the Company's work. However, it looks as if we meant to dig the ore out."

Carnally saw impatience and suspicion in his face.

"I'm asking a good many questions, Jake," Andrew went on, "but I'm in the unfortunate position of having to look after matters I know nothing about. That's a rather remarkable qualification for a director."

"It isn't altogether unusual," Carnally replied. "I could point out one or two men who couldn't tell a pump from a rock drill, and control mining concerns."

"It sounds surprising. How's it done?"

"By hiring subordinates with brains and keeping a careful eye on them."

"I'm serious, Jake. The Company pays my expenses and two hundred dollars a month while I'm in Canada. It's the shareholders' money; I feel that I ought to earn it."

"You may have trouble."

"That wont matter. I've had only a few words with the mine boss, Watson. What kind of man is he?"

"He's straight—a smart manager underground, good at timbering and getting ore out; but that's as far as he goes."

"Well, we'll look at the workings."

As they approached the adit, Watson came to meet them. He was a short, wiry man, clad in wet, soil-stained overalls. Andrew indicated the drainage trench.

"There seems to be a good deal of water in the mine."

"That's so," said Watson. "We want to get rid of it. I've several boys in the sump, baling it up with coal-oil cans."

"You mean the five-gallon drums you get your kerosene in?" Andrews asked in surprise. "Why don't you order a pump?"

"We've got half of one and the engine's fixed. Guess we'll get the rest when Mappin's ready."

"I'll send down word about it to the Landing."

"You needn't. One of the river bosses is up here; he's getting his dinner now."

"But dinner has been finished some time."

"That don't count. We had pork today and the Mappin man figured he'd like trout, so I had to tell Yan Li to cook him some. If you want your plant brought up, you have to be civil to the transport people."

The color swept into Andrew's face.

"Bring the fellow here!"

Watson grinned and called to a miner at work on the dump. The miner disappeared and presently came back with a man.

"You sent for me, Mr. Allinson?" he said, as if he resented it.

"I did," answered Andrew curtly. "You have a pump of ours which has been in your hands some time. I want it delivered here immediately."

The man looked surprised at his tone.

"We'll do what we can, but most of the boys are busy on the road."

"Then you had better send them back to the canoes. Our supplies must not be stopped."

"It's awkward," said the other. "You don't quite understand yet how things are run here, Mr. Allinson. You want to give and take."

"I expect to understand them better soon," Andrew dryly rejoined. "What we want at present is the pump, and if it isn't here by next week I'll charge your employer with the extra expense we're being put to."

"The office wouldn't allow your claim."

"I wont make one," said Andrew. "I'll knock it off your bill. No accounts will be paid without my sanction."

"Oh, well," said the other, "since you make a point of it, I'll get down the river right away and see where that pump is."

He left them, and Watson looked at Carnally as they entered the mine.

"And I thought he was an English sucker!" he remarked.

"You were wrong," said Carnally. "You'll know Mr. Allinson better in a little while."

Seeing that Andrew was waiting, Watson gave him a small flat lamp to hook in his hat, and they went down a narrow gallery. By the uncertain, smoky light Andrew could see that it was strongly timbered; stout props were ranged along its sides, and beams, some cracked and sagging, spanned the roof between. The floor was wet and strewn with large fragments, which seemed to have fallen lately. Watson explained that they were working through treacherous rocks. Presently they stopped at the top of a dark hole, where a man was busy at a primitive windlass.

"Lode dips sharply here," Watson explained. "We had to go down a bit, but we'll push on this heading. Pay dirt's badly broken up, but we'll fix things different when we strike it fair. It's pretty wet in the lower level; do you feel like going down?"

Andrew put on the waterproof jacket that had been given him, and looked at the pit. A rough ladder ran down its side, but the man at the windlass turned to him as he emptied a big can into the drainage trench.

"The rope's quicker and quite as safe," he said. "One of the Mappin boys made that ladder and fixed it wrong. Catch hold here and get a turn round your foot; you don't want to go through the bottom of the can."

Andrew having done as he was directed, the man called a warning to somebody beneath and then let him go. When he had descended a short distance, the rope was checked, and a man, seizing it, swung him across a murky pool, in which the reflection of faint lights quivered; then springing down, he found himself in a short gallery. A smoky lamp burned here and there amidst the timbering, and shadowy figures were busy in recesses with hammer and drill. The floor was strewn with broken rock, damming back the stream that ran along it, and water freely trickled in. Near at hand three or four men were building up a square pillar of timber and rock toward the roof. They wore no clothing above the waist, and the drips from the stone splashed on their wet skin. Watson spoke to one of them before he turned to Andrew.

"Ore's pretty good here," he said. "We had to make a show for the people in Montreal to do some figuring on—that is why I cut so much stuff without leaving more support, though I didn't know the roof was quite so bad. We'll have her shored up in a day or two, but the worst trouble's the water."

Andrew asked him a few questions, and presently went back to the surface, where he sat down in the sunshine and lighted his pipe. A good deal of capital had already been expended, and the result looked discouragingly small. The Company owned a short tunnel, driven into what was evidently inferior ore, and another at the bottom of a pit, which might be choked up by a fall of roof and was threatened with inundation. Still, Andrew supposed that success depended upon the quality of the main body of the ore, which they had hardly reached as yet. When he had finished his pipe, he joined Carnally, who was busy about the machinery by the river.

"Jake," he said, "I want you to go to the Landing and see that the Mappin people send up the plant Watson expects as soon as it's off the cars. I shall

stay here a while and try to learn something about my business."

"Well," drawled Carnally with signs of amusement, "there is a good deal to learn."

He set off early the next morning, and Andrew, putting on a suit of overalls, went down into the mine and insisted on being given practical instruction in the use of the drill. It was a painful process: he was forced to kneel on sharp stones and sometimes in water while he held the steel bar, which jarred his hands when his companion struck it. Nor did he find the work easier when he came to strike, standing in a cramped position without room to swing the hammer, his eyes fixed upon the end of the drill, which must be squarely hit. To miss might result in the other man's knuckles being smashed. The inch of metal which glimmered in the lamplight formed a perplexing mark. Andrew had an accurate eye, however, and did not often miss; and he forgave his instructor for hitting him on the wrist, though this necessitated its being bound up for several days. He learned the quick twist of the drill which brings the cutting edge to bear, and how to wedge up the roof by setting a prop, sawed a little too long for the position, slantwise beneath a beam and hammering it straight; and then he turned his attention to more advanced subjects.

"Watson," he commented one morning, "this mine strikes me as being badly arranged. The best ore's on the lower level; the lode dips, and having the shaft underground must give you extra trouble in getting the stone and water out."

"It does," Watson assented. "You want to remember that we took over Rain Bluff after work had been begun, and the fellows who locate these bush mines often don't know much about their job. If they think the ore's there, they start to get it out the best way they can. I've seen that we'll have to drive a lower adit right in from outside sooner or later, but I'm shy of the expense."

"It seems to me that the money will be profitably spent," Andrew said when they had discussed it for a while. "You'll get it back by saving labor and pumping, while the extra cost you're put to now would probably increase. You'd better start the work at once; I'll be responsible."

Watson was beginning to understand that the resident director possessed abilities which he had by no means suspected at first. He did as he was told, and for the next few weeks Andrew was pleasantly occupied. He learned to nip detonators on the fuses, and how a stick of giant-powder should be inserted into a firing hole. He studied the lines of cleavage in the rock, calculated the cost in labor and explosives of the stone brought down, and found it all interesting. As a matter of fact, it was the first time he had seriously interested himself in anything except sport, and there was encouragement in feeling that he possessed some useful powers. Watson spoke to him as to one who could understand; the miners did not seem to notice his clumsiness. He had expected some banter from them, but none was offered, and he remembered that it was Leonard and his relatives who had shown an amused disbelief in his capabilities.

One day he descended to the lower level, where the men were having trouble in the manager's absence. A number of lamps were burning and the place looked wetter than usual in the unsteady light. Water trickled down the end wall; the rows of props were dripping, and the half-naked men splashed through pools when they moved to and fro. They were feverishly busy; one group building a massive pillar, others putting up fresh props; only two or three were breaking out ore at the working face. Then Carnally came toward him, and his wet face showed tense and anxious in the light of Andrew's lamp.

"The blamed roof's very shaky," he said. "We've had two ugly cave-ins. I wish Watson was back. And I'm getting scared about the water—expect we're tapping a tank-pot in the hill, but there's nothing to help us in locating it. You might give the boys a hand with the pillar."

Andrew stripped to shirt and overall trousers, and hurried toward the spot. He saw that the men needed help,

for the cracked roof was bulging downward ominously and there were several heaps of freshly fallen stones. They were constructing a square frame of logs crossed at the ends, and filling it in with broken rock as fast as they could; but there remained a wide gap between its top and the roof it was meant to support. For an hour he worked savagely, wet with falling water and dripping with perspiration, passing up heavy beams and stones to the men who laid them in place. He grew breathless and tore his hand, but the flakes of rock which fell at intervals urged him on. Once or twice there was a crash farther down the tunnel and he saw shadowy figures scatter and others run in with props, but for the most part he fixed his attention on his task, because it looked as if they had no time to lose. When a gush of water flowing down the heading splashed about his boots, he called Carnally.

"Is this tunnel going to cave in?" he asked.

"That's more than I can tell," Carnally replied. "We may be able to shore her up, but if it's not done soon, the chances of her crushing in are steep."

"I see," said Andrew, and turned to his companions. "Boys, I'll stand for a ten-dollar bonus if this job's finished in half an hour."

One of them laughed, but there was no other response and they did not seem to increase their exertions much. This suggested that they had been doing their utmost already, with a clear recognition of the risk they ran. Their pay was good, but something besides their interest urged them to keep the mine open. These were men who would not easily be beaten by inpouring water or crushing rock; they had braced themselves for a grapple with their treacherous natural foes.

Andrew, however, was feeling the strain. His injured hand was painful; the stones he had to lift were heavy; his arms and back ached; but he meant to hold out, for the gap between roof and pillar was getting narrow. He had raised a ponderous piece of rock and was holding it up to a man who reached for it when there was a smashing sound above and a dark mass rushed past him. The tunnel echoed with a crash, and Andrew received a violent blow on his head. The pain of it turned him dizzy, but he heard a clamor of voices and harsh warning cries. They were followed by a smashing of timber; he saw two or three props crush in; and then half the lights went out and he felt the water washing past his boots.

The next moment his legs were wet, and he set off for the shaft, knee-deep in a rushing flood. There was a confused uproar behind him: stones falling, timber breaking; and then the last of the lamps went out. It cost him an effort to keep his head. Hurrying men jostled him; he struck his feet against sharp stones and was thankful that he did not fall. While he battled with a growing horror, he made for the feeble glimmer which marked the bottom of the shaft. It was a short distance, and he presently stood in the gathering water among a group of half-seen men, watching one being slowly drawn up toward the brighter light above. Another was hurriedly climbing the ladder, while a comrade waited to follow as soon as he was high enough. Then Andrew felt a hand on his arm.

"I was looking for you," Carnally said. "You had better get up. Take the rope as soon as it drops."

Andrew felt a strong desire to do so, but he mastered it.

"No," he returned calmly, "not yet. In a sense, it's my mine; I must see the boys out."

A man near him raised a shout.

"What 's the matter with the winch? Can't you heave on it?"

A deepening rush of water swirled about them and there were sharp cries:

"You above, get on to the handles! When's that rope coming? She ought to carry two!"

A man clutched at the rope, which fell among them, but when another grasped it Andrew interfered.

"Steady, boys!" he said. "The winch wont lift you both. Being heaved up is too slow. Tell them to make the rope fast, and then climb; it's strong enough to carry two or three."

There was a growl of approval; instructions were shouted up; and while

the water rapidly deepened, the group at the foot of the shaft decreased. Andrew, however, was above his waist before he clutched the ladder, while Carnally seized the rope. There was a man above Andrew whose feet he must avoid, and he felt the timber shake, but it was with vast relief that he climbed out of the flood. He was near the top when a cross-batten broke and Grennan, the fellow above him, slipping down a foot or two, bruised Andrew's fingers with his heavy boot. For a brief moment Andrew clung by one hand, and then, his overtired arm suddenly relaxing, his fingers loosed their grasp and he fell, half dazed from pain and horror, into the swirling flood below. A crash of the timbers somewhere in the shaft preceded a fresh onrush of water. The flood was neck-deep and rapidly rising.

VIII

THE ISLAND OF PINES

When Carnally crawled out, wet and breathless, into the open air with the last of the men, he turned to speak to Andrew.

"Where's the boss?" he demanded quickly of Grennan.

Just then the roar of a fresh rushing of waters was borne up to them, and Carnally was filled with anxiety as he leaned over the edge of the pit.

"Allinson!" he shouted.

No answer came, and before the scared miners could fully realize what had happened, Carnally was sliding down the rope. In the feeble light at the bottom he saw Andrew's arms reaching above his head, grasping desperately on to the ladder. He seemed unable to pull himself up, but held on with a vise-grip.

"All right, Allinson!" Carnally called across reassuringly.

Letting go of the rope, a few strokes in the water brought him to the ladder.

"My knee," explained Allinson, his face gray with pain, "struck a sharp ledge at the bottom!"

With Carnally's assistance, he managed to climb to the top of the ladder, where a dozen arms were extended to pull him to safety. He had a bad gash on his knee; his fingers on one hand were bruised and bleeding; and there was a large welt on his head where the cross-beam had struck him; but there seemed to be nothing serious.

He held out his hand to Carnally, and they gripped in silence. Words were unnecessary.

"The cross-pieces of the ladder could not have been properly notched in," Andrew said after a while. "I think it was supplied by Mappin?"

"Yes," answered Carnally, "and it's a rough job!"

"I must endeavor to see that Mappin does his work better. But what's to be done about the flooded level?"

"Try to pump it out; it's fortunate that with a wood-burning engine fuel costs you nothing. I expect Watson will start all the boys at the new heading as soon as he gets back."

For the next two weeks they worked very hard. Then Andrew went down to the Landing on business, and one day he sat lazily in a rowing skiff on the Lake of Shadows. A blaze of sunshine fell upon the shimmering water, which farther on was streaked with deep-blue lines, but close at hand it lay dim and still, reflecting the somber pines. The skiff was drifting past the shore of a rocky island, on which a few maples, turning crimson, made patches of glowing color among the dusky needles, when Andrew saw a girl sitting on the shore. She was near when he noticed her, and it struck him that she was remarkably pretty. The thin white dress, cut in the current fashion, left her finely molded arms uncovered to the elbow and revealed her firm white throat. Her hands were shapely; and—for her hat lay beside her—he noticed the warm coppery tones of her hair. She had gray eyes and her face pleased him, though while observing the regularity of her features, he could not clearly analyze its charm. Then, feeling that he had gazed at her as long as was admissible, he dipped his oars, but, somewhat to his astonishment, she called to him.

"Did you see a canoe as you came?" she asked.

"No," Andrew answered. "Have you lost yours?"

"It floated away; I didn't notice until it was too late. It went toward the point."

She indicated the end of the island, and Andrew nodded.

"It would drift to leeward. I will go and look for it."

As he swung the skiff round it struck him that she had kept curiously still. Her pose was somewhat unusual, for she sat with her feet drawn up beneath her skirt; and skirts, as he remembered, were cut decidedly short. He rowed away and presently saw the canoe some distance off. On running alongside, he noticed a pair of light stockings in the bottom, and laughed as the reason for the girl's attitude became apparent. Pulling back with the canoe astern, he loosed the light craft and drove it toward the beach with a vigorous push.

"Thank you," said the girl, and he tactfully rowed away.

He had not gone far when he heard a hail and saw her standing on the point, waving her hand. For a moment or two he hesitated. As the canoe had grounded within her reach, he could not see what she wanted; and, in view of the discovery he had made, he had imagined that she would have been glad to get rid of him. Still, she had called him and he pulled back.

"Can I be of any further assistance?" he asked, noticing with some relief that she now had her shoes on.

"Yes," she said frankly. "I am marooned here; there's no paddle in the canoe."

"No paddle? But how could it have fallen out?"

"I don't know; and it doesn't seem an important point. Perhaps the canoe rocked, and it overbalanced."

"I could tow you to the Landing," Andrew suggested.

His manner was formally correct and she felt half amused. This young man was obviously not addicted to indiscriminate gallantry.

"I don't want to go to the Landing, and the canoe would tow easier with no one in it. Your skiff will carry two."

He ran the craft in, made fast the canoe, and then held out his hand. When she was seated, he pushed off.

"Where shall I take you?" he asked gravely.

"To the large island yonder—the Island of Pines," she said, indicating it; and he knew that this was Geraldine Frobisher, whom Mappin had discussed. Andrew admitted that his description of her was warranted.

"You have been unlucky," he remarked.

"I've been careless and have had to pay for it. We got breakfast early and I've missed my lunch."

"It's nearly three o'clock," said Andrew, pulling faster. "But how is it no one came to look for you?"

"My aunt goes to sleep in the afternoon; my father had some business at the Landing—if he had been at home it would have taken him some time to find me. He would have searched the nearer islands first, systematically and in rotation." She smiled. "That's the kind of man he is. I suppose you have guessed who I am?"

"Miss Frobisher?"

"And you're Mr. Allinson. It wasn't hard to identify you. Perhaps you know that your doings are a source of interest to the people at the Landing."

"I can't see why that should be so."

"For one thing, they seem to think you are up against what they call 'a tough proposition.'"

Andrew's face grew thoughtful. Since the collapse of the heading he had spent a fortnight in determined physical toil, as his scarred hands and broken nails testified. It had been a time of stress and anxiety, and during it he had realized that the mine would be a costly one to work. The ore must carry a high percentage of metal if it were to pay for extraction.

"I'm afraid that's true," he said.

"Then you wont get much leisure for hunting and fishing?"

Andrew laughed.

"After all, those were not my objects in coming out, though you're not the only person who seems to have concluded that they were."

"I have no opinion on the matter," Geraldine declared. "But at the Landing you are supposed to be more of a sportsman than a miner—isn't it flattering to feel that people are talking

about you? Then you are really working at the mine?"

"So far I've saved the Company about two dollars and a-half a day."

"But isn't your voice in controlling things worth more than that?"

"No," Andrew replied, "I'm afraid it isn't."

"Then you don't know much about mining?"

"I believe," Andrew answered dryly, "I know a little more than I did."

Geraldine was pleased with him. The man was humorously modest, but he looked capable and resolute.

"Well," she said, "it can't be easy work—though one understands that getting the ore out is not always the greatest difficulty."

"It's hard enough when the roof comes down, and the props crush in, and the water breaks in. Still, I believe you're right."

"I know something about these matters," she said, and then surprised him by a sudden turn of the subject. "There's one man you can trust. I mean Jake Carnally."

"Do you know him?"

"He built our boat pier and cleared the bush to make our lawn. We often made him talk to us; and I know my father, who's a good judge, thought a good deal of him."

"Jake," said Andrew cautiously, "rather puzzles me: I can get so little out of him, though I like the man. As you seem to know the people I have to deal with, is there anybody else you would vouch for?"

Geraldine's face hardened.

"No, I don't know of anybody else; but you will soon be able to form your own opinion."

This struck Andrew as significant, because she must have heard of his connection with Mappin, who visited the house. Just then he caught sight of a boat that swung around the end of an island and headed toward them with bows buried in foam.

"A gasoline launch," he said. "She's traveling very fast."

"It's ours," explained Geraldine. "My father must have got back from the Landing and has come to look for me."

The launch was soon abreast of them and stopped near the skiff. A man of middle age, in light clothes, held the tiller and looked at Geraldine inquiringly.

"I suppose you have been dreadfully worried," she said with a smile at him. "I was cast away on a desolate island when the canoe went adrift, and should have been there still, only Mr. Allinson came to my rescue." She turned to Andrew. "My father, Henry T. Frobisher."

Andrew noticed that Frobisher glanced at him keenly when he heard his name, but he started the engine and ran the launch alongside.

"Come on board and see our island," he said. "I'll take you back to the Landing afterward."

Andrew followed Miss Frobisher into the craft and made the skiff and canoe fast astern, and they set off and presently reached a short pier which ran out into still, clear water. A lawn stretched down to the shore, bordered with flowers, and at the end of it a wooden house stood against a background of somber pines. A veranda ran across the front, the rows of slender columns braced by graceful arches; above were green-shuttered windows, steep roofs, and gables.

Andrew was taken in and presented to Frobisher's sister, Mrs. Denton, a lady with a languid expression and formal manners. Then tea was served in artistic china, and after some general conversation Frobisher led Andrew to a small room on the upper story, which looked out upon the lake, and gave him an excellent cigar. Noticing him glance at the maps unrolled on a table, he smiled.

"I find that I can't get away from business," he explained. "It follows me down here; and in a new country like this there's generally some interesting project cropping up. I go off into the bush hunting, and see something that looks like an opportunity; the idea sticks to me and begins to develop."

"So far, I haven't found the prospects here very encouraging; but I suppose mining's slow," Andrew responded. "What do you deal in?"

"Land, lumber, waterfalls that will

drive turbines—anything in the shape of natural resources. But how are you getting on at Rain Bluff?"

Andrew reflected that as the Company's operations would be freely discussed at the Landing, there was no reason why he should be reticent. Besides, he felt inclined to trust his host. The man had a keen, thoughtful face, but its seriousness was relieved by his genial smile.

"I'm afraid we're not getting on very fast," he said, and related the mishaps they had met with.

"You seem to find the work harder than you expected."

"I must admit it," said Andrew. "If it were merely a question of propping up the roof, getting rid of the water, and cutting out the ore, I'd feel less diffident. It's the business complications that I have the most trouble in understanding."

Frobisher gave him a keen glance.

"That side's generally involved. Rain Bluff, however, has a good big capital, I understand."

"Which means big liabilities. We're naturally expecting to pay dividends on it."

"It's an expectation that's not invariably realized," Frobisher remarked dryly. "You feel that your shareholders ought to be satisfied?"

"Of course. That's why I'm here."

"Our acquaintance is short, but if you don't feel that I'm too much of a stranger, I might perhaps be able to throw some light on any points that you're puzzled about. I've had a pretty extensive experience in these matters."

He was mildly gratified by his guest's ready confidence, but Andrew had been endowed with a quick and accurate judgment of character. He talked without reserve as Frobisher drew him out; and the American listened with unusual interest. The affairs of the Rain Bluff Company were no concern of his, but the working of Allinson's mind fixed his attention. Allinson was obviously a novice in such matters, but, for an untrained man, he showed a grasp of the salient points and a boldness in attacking difficulties which Frobisher thought remarkable. Lighting a fresh cigar when Andrew had finished, he smoked a while in silence. With a few words he might explain the Company's situation in a manner that would fill his guest with astonishment and perhaps dismay, but on the whole it did not seem advisable that they should be spoken. It would be better that Allinson should find out for himself how matters stood. Frobisher felt strongly curious about what he would do then.

Andrew presently looked up, as if he expected some comment.

"There are one or two suggestions I might make," said Frobisher.

They were not of much moment, though they promised to save Andrew some time and trouble, and after discussing them he rose to go. When they reached the hall Geraldine met them.

"If you are going to the Landing, I'll come with you," she said. "There are a few things I want from the stores."

"Then if Mr. Allinson will excuse me, I'll let you take him. I have some matters to consider before the mail tomorrow; and waiting while you buy millinery is a tedious business."

Frobisher shook hands with Andrew cordially.

"Come back to the Island of Pines whenever you feel inclined," he said, and Andrew and Geraldine walked down to the pier.

She started the engine and stood aft, holding the helm, while Andrew sat on a locker, looking about while the launch swept noisily away. The days were rapidly getting shorter, and the sunlight had faded off the lake. The breeze had fallen and the water lay gleaming, smooth as oil, with the shadow of the rocks and trees floating on it. Here and there a clump of pines to the westward stood out, black and rugged, against a glow of pink and green; the air was cold and filled with a resinous fragrance. But Geraldine occupied most of Andrew's attention. She stood, gracefully poised, her light dress fluttering in the draught made by the launch's speed, and a clear, warm color glowing in her face. Presently she made some remarks which demanded an answer, and they chatted gaily until she ran the launch alongside the wharf. Sorry indeed that the launch had been

so speedy, Andrew left her here, and went to his hotel.

After making her purchases, Geraldine returned to the island, where she found her father sitting on the pier with a notebook in his hand.

"You landed your passenger safely, I see. What did you think of him?"

"He didn't give me much opportunity for forming an opinion, except that he's rather serious," Geraldine answered with a smile. "Besides, I don't suppose my opinion would be worth as much as yours."

"That's a very modest admission; I thought you imagined yourself a good judge of young men. Anyway, I'm interested in this one; perhaps because he has upset the ideas I had about him."

"How?"

"For one thing, he's straight—straight as a plumb-line, which isn't altogether what I expected. Then, for a man engaged in business, he's a type that's new to me."

"Are those remarks connected?" Geraldine asked with a laugh. "You're engaged in business and nobody could be straighter than you are."

Frobisher looked at her with appreciation.

"I'm afraid there have been occasions when I had to sail dangerously near the wind; but that's outside the question. I'm sorry for this young fellow—there's trouble ahead for him."

"You mean financial trouble? Of course, I've heard people talking about the mine."

"Not altogether; anyway, if I'm right about him, I don't think he'll find that the worst." Frobisher broke into a thoughtful smile. "After all, I have met business men who didn't consider their money the most important thing they could lose. But I'm inclined to think the people who sent Allinson over here have made a mistake."

Geraldine was unwilling to betray too great an interest in the man; and, indeed, her curiosity about him did not go very far.

"Oh, well," she said, "it really doesn't concern us."

She turned toward the house, and Frobisher looked out across the water. From what he knew about Rain Bluff Mine he had concluded that Allinson must be either a clever and somewhat unscrupulous exploiter of such ventures, or a guileless ignoramus who could be made a tool of. Now, having met him, he was convinced that the man was neither of these.

IX

AMIDST THE ICE

GRAHAM was sitting on the veranda of his house at the Landing after supper one evening when Andrew joined him. The veranda was broad, and covered with mosquito-netting, and furnished with a table and one or two chairs; the wooden house was small but pretty. In front, a plot of grass, kept green throughout the hot summer by an automatic sprinkler, ran, unfenced, to the edge of the dusty road. Across this a belt of blackened fir stumps stretched back to the stacks of lumber by the sawmill, and beyond that the lake lay shining in the evening light.

A window was open and Andrew could hear a girl singing. A rattle of crockery which suggested that Mrs. Graham was busy with domestic duties also reached him now and then; and a lad who had greeted him pleasantly as he passed sat on the nearest fir stump talking with a companion. Graham seemed to indicate it all with a movement of his pipe as he turned to Andrew.

"My world, Mr. Allinson," he said. "A happy one, but narrow."

"I feel inclined to envy you," Andrew replied.

"I am to be envied; I admit it with gratitude." Graham glanced half wistfully at a map on the table. "For all that, I remember the wide spaces up yonder now and then."

"If I were in your place, I wouldn't study that map too much."

"Ah! It isn't an amusement that I often indulge in; but sometimes, when I've spent a week making up trumpery lumber bills or getting in five-dollar accounts, I find it a solace to recall what I used to do. However, I've inconsistently practised prudent self-denial in other ways. There was a moose head—

a beast I shot—I took off its stand and gave to the Institute; an old pair of snowshoes that hung above the mantel I gave my boy. He said they were very poor things and sadly out of date."

Andrew glanced at the map and noticed the lines penciled across it. He felt that he was not acting considerately in tempting Graham, but he could not resist.

"Those marks show the marches you have made?" he asked.

Graham laid his finger on the map, moving it from spot to spot.

"Yes. I don't need a diary; I can see it all again. We started here one winter and made three hundred miles on half rations, with wind and snow ahead all the way. There we camped three days in a blizzard, among some willows, while the snow piled up six feet to lee of us. I made this line through a country new to me; two hundred miles over soft snow, with the dogs playing out and the timber wolves on my trail for the last few days. This lake ends in a big muskeg, and we snagged our canoe there one day. As she'd ripped her bilge open, we left her and spent a day and a half floundering through two or three feet of water and tall reeds, and carrying loads of sixty pounds." He paused and indicated a line that broke off abruptly in a wide bare space. "The lode lies south of here, and I believe I'm the only survivor of the few who knew of it. One half-breed was drowned in a rapid, another lost in a blizzard; the agent, so I heard afterward, left the factory to visit some Indians three or four miles off and they found him next day in a snowdrift, frozen to death."

"A grim country," Andrew said thoughtfully, "and yet—"

Graham laughed, rather harshly.

"Yes; I think you know! Well, I'm glad that for twenty years I've mastered the longing and kept my head. Now, however, my children have made a fair start, with prospects of going farther than I have done, and my responsibility is lightening. A winter up there would satisfy me—I'm afraid it would be all I could stand now—and though it's still out of the question, I've a feeling that a way may be found before I grow too old."

He rolled up the map resolutely and laid it aside, and soon afterward Mrs. Graham's voice reached them.

"Bring Mr. Allinson in. It's getting chilly."

Andrew rose and followed Graham into his sitting-room. It was very small and there were signs of economy in its appointments, but it had a homelike charm. Two or three sketches in color which showed some talent hung on the varnished board walls. The lamp, though obviously cheap, was of artistic design; the rug on the stained floor and the hangings were of harmonious hue. Mrs. Graham, a little, faded woman with a cheerful air, sat sewing at a table, and opposite her a girl was busy with some papers. Both greeted Andrew cordially, and a few minutes later the young man he had seen outside came in.

He was a handsome lad, quicker of speech and more assertive than his father; and the girl, who now and then made a remark, had a decided air. It struck Andrew that Graham, dressed in shabby clothes, listening good-humoredly while his children talked, had somehow the look of a captive eagle, conscious of crippled wings, though the simile was a bad one because there was no predatory fierceness in him.

"One of you might shut the door," said Mrs. Graham. "The nights are getting colder fast; we'll soon have to light the basement heater." She turned to Andrew. "This is a hard country in winter. I've seen the thermometer stand a week at fifty below."

"Don't be scared, Mr. Allinson," laughed the lad, as he closed the door. "It's not often too fierce, and in a place like the Landing there's generally something going on. Will the frost interfere with your mining?"

"Not underground," said Andrew. "I understand that nothing can be done on the surface, but we expect to send off a good lot of ore for experimental reduction in the next week or two. Then we'll have something to base our plans on."

"Mappin's going to handle the transport, I guess. That man's surely on to a soft thing. I s'pose you know he's making his pile out of the Rain Bluff?"

Mrs. Graham glanced at her son in rebuke.

"I don't think you should talk to Mr. Allinson in that manner, Jim. He's a good deal older and more experienced than you are."

"Your ideas are out of date, Mother; we've grown ahead of them. Mr. Allinson doesn't look as if he minded. Anyway, he doesn't know as much as I do about the Canadian contractor." He turned to Andrew. "Do you like it up yonder?"

"Yes," Andrew answered good-humoredly, "I like the work better than anything I remember having done."

"A matter of taste. Now I can't see much amusement in rolling rocks about or standing in wet slickers in a dark pit watching the boys punch the drills."

"Mr. Allinson is not doing it for amusement," said his mother.

"Well, money isn't often made that way. You don't get rich by knowing how to use the hammer and giant-powder."

"I believe that's true," Andrew responded with a smile.

"A sure thing! Money is made by sitting tight in your office and hiring other fellows to do the rough work. They break up the rocks and cut the milling logs; you take the profit. It's business, first and last, for mine!"

"This is a favorite pose of his," the girl explained to Andrew. "It's the latest fashion among the boys; they're afraid of being thought altruistic."

"Now that everything is controlled by mergers and they make all we need so dear, one is forced to be practical," Mrs. Graham remarked feelingly. "For all that, it jars on me to hear our young people talk as they do."

Graham laughed and changed the subject, and soon afterward Andrew took his leave. He spent the next evening with Frobisher, whom he had now visited several times, and on the following morning set out for the mine, where he worked very hard for a few weeks. They were still using the old adit, though the new one was being driven toward the lower level. Then he and Carnally left the camp in a canoe to hurry forward some stores and, after arranging for their quicker transport, stood on a little promontory, looking down the river, late one gloomy afternoon.

Winter had set in with unusual rigor. The gray sky was barred with leaden cloud; the pines, which looked strangely ragged and somber, stood out with harsh distinctness against the first thin snow; and the river flowed, a dark-colored riband, through a clean-cut channel in the ice. A nipping wind blew down the gorge, and now and then light flakes of snow fell.

"We had better push on," Carnally suggested. "It looks as if the messenger hadn't got through, and we'll hardly make the mine before midnight. There's heavy snow coming and we have no provisions or camp outfit."

"Wait an hour," said Andrew. "The smelter people promised to let me know the results they got and the letter was due yesterday. I'm anxious about the thing."

Carnally agreed. They had sent out a quantity of ore for reduction, and particulars of the yield in refined metal would throw a useful light on the prospects of the mine. The last analysis of specimens selected to represent the bulk had not been encouraging, but this test was unsatisfactory because the ore was variable.

"Let's get out of the wind," Carnally said. "If I'd expected this kind of weather, I'd have brought my fur coat along."

They found a sheltered spot among a clump of pines, where they sat down; but Andrew felt disturbed and apprehensive. The Company had spent money freely; the mine was expensive to work, and of late Watson had grown morose and reserved. Even when Andrew pressed him, he had avoided giving his opinion. The report of the smelting company would, however, show how matters stood, and Andrew looked out anxiously for the expected messenger.

It got dark, though they could still see the glimmer of the ice, and at length they heard a faint, regular splashing, made by canoe poles. A shout answered their hail, and when they ran down the bank a man came cautiously across the fringe of ice.

"Here's your mail," he said, handing

Andrew some letters. "Now that I've given it to you, we'll get back."

"Wont you come on to the mine with us?"

"No, sir! It's steep chances you don't get there to-night and we can make a Mappin camp in about three hours down-stream."

"It would be wiser to follow him," Carnally suggested. "We'll have heavy snow before long."

"I'm going on," said Andrew doggedly. "I must compare the report with our books and get Watson to tell me what he thinks as soon as possible."

Launching their canoe, they poled her laboriously against the current, which ran fast between its banks of ice. Andrew was thankful that the snow on the frozen surface threw up a faint light and they could see the glimmer of the floes that drifted down, though it was not always possible to avoid them. Once or twice there was a crash as a heavy mass struck the canoe, which was too lightly built to stand much of this buffeting. Andrew had thick mittens, but they soon got wet and his hands grew numbed. He was not clad for rigorous weather, and his exertions failed to keep him warm.

Still, they were making progress, and they met with no serious difficulty until they entered a slacker reach. It had been open when they came down, but now the channel made by the current was glazed with thin ice, through which they could hardly drive the canoe. Indeed, in some places Carnally was forced to break the crust with the pole while Andrew paddled.

"If there's much more of this, it will be late to-morrow before we make camp," Andrew remarked.

"We'll have to leave the river pretty soon, but we'll stick to it as long as we can," Carnally replied. "It's rough traveling through the bush, and the shore ice is hardly safe yet."

They got through the reach, paddled laboriously against a swifter stream, and dragged the canoe over a portage, stumbling among big stones and across frozen pools. During this passage Andrew fell and hurt himself; but stopping was out of the question. Launching the craft on the upper edge of the rapid, they drove her out. For a minute or two they made no progress, and Andrew, straining at his pole, feared that they would be swept down the wild, foaming rush; but they found slacker water and the ominous roar of the rapid died away. Then snow began to fall, making it difficult to see, though they had the faint glimmer of the shore-ice for a guide. In the reach up which they were poling, it did not run out far because the stream was strong, and they had gone some distance when there was a heavy thud and a curious crunch at the bows.

"In with her!" cried Carnally. "Head for the slack behind the point!"

They ran in through crackling ice and had reached the thicker strip along the bank when Andrew felt his knees grow wet. Feeling with his hand, he found there was an inch or two of water in the bottom of the craft.

"Skin's punched through," Carnally explained. "We can't bale her and use the pole. You'll have to get out."

Andrew did so hastily, but the ice on which he landed cracked as he moved, and he had gone several yards before it seemed strong enough to bear him. Carnally dragged the canoe out, and then turned cautiously up-stream.

"We'll have to chance the ice for the next mile or two," he said. "It's rough country—steep rock and very thick scrub—on this side."

As they moved forward, Andrew noticed that the snow was falling faster and the wind freshening. The cold flakes drove into his tingling face and he had to brace himself against the gusts. The gorge they followed was wrapped in obscurity and filled with the roar of water and the wailing of the trees. However, he held on for some time—and then suddenly felt no support for his foot. It was too late to stop; the next moment he was in the water. The shock took his breath away; he had a horrible fear of being drawn under the ice, and it was with vast relief that he found he could stand up waist-deep. Moving cautiously, he got his knee upon the ice, but it broke away; then he saw that Carnally was lying down near the edge and holding out his hand.

"Get your arms on it, and catch hold," he said.

As he obeyed, Andrew heard the ice crack, but his weight was now well distributed and he crawled forward, clutching Carnally's hand. Then he got up, dripping and shaking with cold.

"Thanks!" he said. "That's a risk I don't mean to run again. If it had been a foot deeper I'd never have got out."

Carnally turned toward the bank and, in thick darkness, they scrambled up a steep slope among stunted pines. Leaving its summit, they floundered over the rounded surfaces of outcropping rocks and plunged into hollows filled with thick brush. The pines were smaller farther on, which made things worse, for they had to force a passage through the snow-laden needles. Some had been partly blown down and leaned on one another in tangles which would have been difficult to traverse in daylight. How Carnally kept his line Andrew could not tell, for they had lost the sound of the river, and the snow was thick; but he steadily pushed on, and after a while the country grew more open. Here the wind was worse and Andrew, who was getting worn out, struggled forward stupidly with lowered head and labored breath. He could not remember how long he kept it up, but at last a light blinked among the trees and he recognized joyfully that it came from a shack at the mine.

X

A CRISIS

It was late at night when Andrew entered Watson's office at the mine with the letters he had brought. Though a bitter wind blew the snow about it, the little wooden building was hot and filled with the smell of pine boarding. A stove, glowing a dull red, stood at one end, and a kerosene lamp hanging from a beam threw a bright light on the faces of the men. They were eager and expectant, but Andrew's bore the stamp of fatigue, for the journey up-river had tried his strength. Moreover, he shrank from learning what the smelting company's report might reveal. But know he must; and drawing a chair to the table, he opened a large sealed envelope with a steady hand.

As he took out the first of its contents he made an abrupt movement, but he read on through several sheets while his face hardened; and then he sat very still, with the papers scattered about the table.

"Well?" said Watson, in harsh inquiry.

Gathering up the papers, Andrew passed them to him without a word, while Carnally waited as if he knew what to expect. When he in turn took the report from Watson, there was an oppressive silence in the shack. Andrew could hear the billets snap in the stove and the murmur of the river among the ice.

"It seems to me that this report leaves us no room for doubt," he said, when Carnally had finished reading the papers. "We can't keep the mine working on such returns as these. But I want your honest opinion."

Watson made a sign of agreement.

"Well," he said frankly, "you have got to have the truth, though I guess it will cost me my job. Rain Bluff will never pay its shareholders."

"You knew this some time ago?"

"I was afraid of it; but it wasn't my business. I was sent here to get out as much ore as I could, and I've done so."

"Have you any suggestion to make?"

"If you wrote down your capital, got rid of Mappin, and did your transport work yourselves, you might keep going. The ore's there, though it's hard to get at and not worth much."

Andrew turned to Carnally.

"You suspected how matters stood from the beginning. I see now that you meant to warn me."

"I guessed. I couldn't speak plainly without proof."

"Oh," said Andrew in a strained voice, "you knew; so did Watson, and no doubt every man who works for us. I and the unfortunate people who found the money were the only ones deceived." He turned to the manager sharply. "What did you mean when you said the mine would never pay its shareholders? Do you imply that somebody else may make a profit out of it"

"You've hit it. Mappin's making his

pile, and I guess there's a man with money backing him; but that's no concern of mine. I'm sorry for you, Mr. Allinson, but I suppose I must hand you my notice and tell the boys to quit?"

"No," said Andrew, "not yet. Let them go on as usual, until I speak to you again."

"I'm not anxious to leave your service—you're square," Watson replied with an air of relief. "Now, if you don't want me any more, I'll go to bed."

He left them and Andrew quietly filled his pipe, while Carnally watched him with interest. Andrew had had a shock, but he had borne it well. But there was something else he must be told.

"Jake," Andrew said at length, "this has been a blow. I put a good deal of money into the Company and will lose it, but that's only half the trouble—the rest will hardly bear thinking of. My firm put its stamp on this venture, backed it with its name; and it was rotten from the first!" His face suddenly darkened with suspicion. "How Leonard came to take it up I can't imagine."

"If he's the man who fixed things in Montreal, I guess he'd tell you it was a fair business risk; but you don't quite understand the matter yet. It's clear that Mappin has the support of Mr. Hathersage; he finds him the money, gives him the job at prices higher than you need pay, and no doubt takes a share of the profit."

Andrew started.

"It's hard to admit, but I believe you're right!" Then his mind leaped to a wider conclusion. "I dare say the Company was started solely for Hathersage's benefit!"

"I guess there's some foundation for that," Carnally said pointedly.

Neither spoke for the next few moments; and then Andrew looked up with a grim smile.

"I'm beginning to understand your attitude toward me when I first came. You thought I was in the ring—one of the people who, knowing how bad it was, led investors into this rotten scheme!"

"I allow I did think something of the kind."

"And afterward? My guess isn't flattering, but I can't blame you, Jake. You believed I was what you call a sucker, sent here because I was too big a fool to find things out."

Carnally looked embarrassed.

"I figured it out like this," he said: "the people who sent you expected you'd spend your time hunting and fishing, without taking much interest in the mine. Then, if trouble came, they'd leave you to face it. Being on the spot, it would be your fault for not learning what was wrong."

"A clever plan. After all, it's possible they took too much for granted."

"They did," Carnally declared. "You have shown a grip of things they didn't look for. In my opinion they picked the wrong man for the part; but you're in a pretty tight place. You can't make this mine pay."

"No," said Andrew, "I don't mean to try. If I can get his consent, I'm going to look for Graham's lode."

Carnally started.

"It's a great plan! Will you want me?"

"Of course! I'd be helpless without you."

"No," Carnally corrected him with a smile. "So far, I've given you hints about things you couldn't be expected to know; but I've taught you all I can, and you take your right place now. You're boss in this new proposition, and I'll be glad to be your second."

"Thank you," said Andrew. "We'll start for the Landing to-morrow and see Graham."

The next installment of this novel—wherein Allinson demonstrates that he is by no means "the family fool," and wherein he undertakes the quest of Graham's lode—will appear in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, **on sale February 1st.**

Caviare and Corned Beef

"One-Round Logan" determines to put a polish on his conversation, and undertakes a training course in shadow-boxing with a dictionary. When he has put the English language to the mat for the count, he falls in love; and thereupon sundry remarkable things happen.

By FRANK CONDON

THERE can be no argument about it.

Anyone, with common sense, who beholds another human being striving for the attainment of better things, struggling to make more of himself than he is, yearning for the higher and nobler attributes and aiming into the misty void above so that he may become a more polished, charitable, educated, gentle, amiable citizen—anybody who sees a fellow-being thus enwrapped with ambition, must take off his hat in admiration and speak fair words.

To be born into a certain station of life and to remain there inert, helpless, hopeless and unambitious is a sad and calamitous situation, but to realize one's weaknesses and failings and to set forth with determination to steer a straight course—

"One-Round" Logan, of Decoursey Street and the popular fight clubs of the East Side, rolled a cigarette between his stubby fingers and cast a disapproving glance across the room towards his manager.

"Dere aint nuttin' to it at all," spake "One-Round" slowly and deliberately, licking the paper into place and completing the cigarette with a dexterous twist of the same fingers that had brought disaster to his antagonists. "I'm fer dis educatid stuff—you hear me. I got a bale of coin and I got it honest an' I knows I'm a horrible boob whenever dere's anybody around dat ever went to school. My conversation sounds like somebody drivin' rivets into a beer can, and while I got de brains, I aint got de right way to send de woids outa me face. So I says to you, right here, dat I'm goin' to chase meself across town to one o' dem wise guys and have him learn me how to say de woids and de sentences, and den when I meet de district leader, I kin spiel wit him like a gentleman and I kin meet society ladies and talk wid 'em widout havin' 'em call a cop to chase de rowdy away. Yuh get me?"

"I gets yuh and I hands yuh right back," the fighter's manager retorted sneeringly. "Yuh make me sick. Yuh make a lot o' money in de ring and right away yuh get swelled. Listen to me. When I picked yuh outa de gutter and—"

Then the manager proceeded to explain that even a successful East Side prize-fighter is unfitted by birth, training and surroundings for sitting in Delmonico's of a summer afternoon, balancing a pot of tea in one hand and eating lady-fingers with the other, the while tossing off verbal quips and pleasantries to the bevy of society ladies who have just blown in from Newport in their motors to listen to his gallant words.

Better than "One-Round" Logan there were none. For the past four years he had been turning back ambitious scrappers with a right-hand swing to the jaw that would place in peril the studded front of a locomotive boiler. Careful habits, a good manager and the accident of being a natural fighter drew the boy from the bottom of the pugilistic ladder to the top rung. He was the champion of the one hundred and thirty-three pound class, and at the moment of discussing affairs with his doubting manager he had enough money in the banks to buy a railroad.

New York pays handsomely for its idolatries, and it showers upon its idols both unstinted praise and many buckets of the shining yellow metal; and that is because New York is rich and somewhat hysterical. It was a dull day when the sporting pages failed to come forth with a fresh photograph of the champion driving his ninety-horse-power motor-car or mailing a money-order to his adoring mother in Belfast.

And New York demanded nothing more of Mr. Logan's conversational ability than Mr. Logan already possessed. All it asked was his flying right hand, the snake-like shift, the thud of fist upon flesh and the "—nine, ten—you're out" of the referee.

Possibly the same quality of grim determination that had brought "One-Round" to the apex of the pugilistic pyramid stirred within him and carried him over town to the genteel professor who needed money and who guaranteed to correct Mr. Logan's pronunciation and endow him with such a profusion of chivalric and educated sentences that even the late Samuel Johnson could find no fault.

Therefore we will leave "One-Round" sitting in the professor's dining-room, doing stunts in shadow-boxing with a thick and terrifying dictionary and listening to the undefiled English as it rippled off the professor's lips.

We will now shake hands with Maisey Rooney and be properly grateful for the opportunity, because upon looking into Maisey's eyes, we observe that they are highly decorative and full of lights and shadows and allurements.

Maisey was tall and looked like one of those Barrymore girls. It is not tampering with the truth in the least to state that you could walk a hole in a new shoe before you would see any such roses as were in Maisey's cheeks or a smile equal to the pleasant miracle that took place when Maisey smiled. Her figure was the kind you can look at without feeling the slightest pain in either eye, and she was dignified, amiable and able to take a pen in her ornamental right hand and write a check of size and proportions.

It had not always been so with Maisey Rooney. She had begun life, as nearly as she could remember, in a small room somewhere near the East River, and from that time forward, nothing much happened to her except that she went to work in a hat factory for three dollars a week and twelve hours a day.

A few centuries rolled by and Maisey grew up to be a fine girl in spite of the hat factory and other things. And one day, after her tired fingers had wearied of sewing the eternal pink roses into the hats, and the eternal cheap lace, Maisey bowed her head and thought of something. The thought came to her quite naturally. If the sewing of thousands and thousands of yards of lace into thousands of hats wearied the fingers of poor working girls and made their eyes ache, why not fix up something that would do that work instead of fragile human fingers?

Then Maisey did something that few girls ever do. She made an invention. With a bunch of wires and some clips and small springs, she contrived a little jigger that was destined to greatness and which became to the lace hat business what the telephone is to a chorus girl. Maisey talked with a man she

knew and he told her if you patent your inventions with our good and honorable government, mean and conspiring corporations cannot steal your achievement. Thereupon the man in Washington who makes out the blue papers notified the world that Maisey Rooney of New York had invented a hat jigger and anybody who was found stealing her invention would suffer tortures.

The hat factory accepted Maisey's invention at once and discharged a score of Maisey's friends, which pained Maisey but which could not be avoided. A line of hat factory owners came to Maisey with humble words and begged her to permit them to use her invention and discharge their girls, and Maisey looked into her books and told them the cost.

Fame, wealth and adulation came all of a sudden to the girl who lived for so long in a windowless room and worked twelve hours a day. The lady writers for the afternoon papers interviewed her. Her picture appeared next to the recipes for removing freckles with glycerine and milk. Young men proposed to her suddenly and by mail, and envious stenographers, going home wearily from their work, read in the papers of the thirty dozen silk stockings Maisey ordered each week—which was not true. Something that never was printed by the papers was the mournful and shocking fact that Maisey's manner of speaking was not that of a feminine person with a fortune flowing into her coffers daily.

"De hell of it is," Maisey said gloomily to Lil Nelson, her only pal—and that was the actual word Maisey said—"de hell of it is dat I got all dis coin, and I look all right and I kin buy motor-cars if I want to, and at de same time, I'm a holy show when I opens me mout'. Dere aint a lady in de woild who's ignoranter dan I am, and dat's because I never had no chance to go to school. Wot'll I do, Lil? I'm ashamed. I don't know nobody but people who talk like I do, and when I listens to dese newspaper ginks and dere fine woids, I git a pain all over me. It aint too late, is it, Lil, fer me to get a little learnin'?"

"You're a young goil yet," Lil responded philosophically, "an' if yer sets yer mind on it and studies hard, dere's nuttin' to it. You'll be talkin' as sweet as Lady Clara Vere de Vere in six munt's; and den, of course, you'll be fergittin' me and the likes of me."

"Does you tink I kin learn it?" Maisey continued eagerly. "I'm game. I'll never quit studyin', and if it's in me, I'll drag it out or bust. I wantta be a lady and talk like they does."

A little spinster on West End Avenue, with a pale brow and a college education, opened her door and beheld a vision in furs who explained in a language the spinster had never heard before that she desired polish, poise and perspicacity in connection with the words of the English tongue.

"Come inside and we will talk it over," the little spinster said, and Maisey disappeared within the tents of education.

The Old Gentleman with the Hourglass and the Scythe passed on, here, there and even in Toledo, where the only things they have are morning, noon and night. By the time you could build a fret-work bridge from Williamsburg to New York, a change had taken place in the manners and speech of two young persons.

Mr. "One-Round" Logan emerged finally from the chrysalis of ignorance and took on the wings of denatured speech. The professor polished him until he shone resplendent and the words of conversation came forth without a blemish from the lips that had often stopped a left hook. He had the final test in a long conversation with a Bowdoin University graduate, and when it had ended, the professor patted him upon his muscular back and told him to go forth into the world fearlessly.

Likewise, Maisey Rooney left the improving company of the little spinster in full and complete possession of every final *"g"* in the language. In addition to being a treat to gaze upon her, it was now a joy to listen to the velvety words and to wonder why they should ever leave lips so alluring.

In the solid gold dining-room of the Hotel De Luxe, Mr. "One-Round"

Logan handed his silk hat and his stick to the gratified menial at the door and accepted the escort of a Swiss prince to the nearest vacant table. Beautiful ladies in evening clothes glanced admiringly upon the well-moulded figure of the young fighter, and anæmic citizens with pigeon chests honored him with envy. He dropped languidly into his seat and picked up the bill of fare.

"Waiter," he said, "you may bring me a roast pheasant, some asparagus tips à la Ghent, a bit of caviare and a pint of eighty-nine Gomery, sec. And be sure to have the chef place three thin slices of bacon upon the pheasant's breast while it is roasting."

"Yes, sir," replied the waiter in the quiet tones for which the De Luxe waiters are famous. He moved silently away, and Mr. Logan glanced casually about him. He adjusted his cravat and listened to the dreamy tones of the hidden orchestra, and then he noticed the slight commotion at the entrance to the dining-room, where four waiters were attempting to make life pleasant and enjoyable for Maisey Rooney, who was just coming in.

"My word," murmured Mr. Logan, staring. "What a stunning girl!"

Others in the great room allowed their gaze to linger upon the exquisite vision in white silk. Crowded as it was, there were none too intent upon food to look and appreciate the graceful creature who seemed to glide over the thick carpets after the same Swiss prince who had found a table for Mr. Logan.

Now she was standing almost before him, and the Swiss person was making apologetic motions with his hands, indicating that mortal sorrow was upon him, but that there remained no vacant places—except at the table occupied by the gentleman.

Would the lady object? Maisey Rooney's shoulders lifted in the faintest possible intimation of a shrug and the hint of a tolerant smile flitted over her face. In another instant, the servitor was drawing back the chair opposite Mr. Logan and the lady was sitting down.

At the first words that came from the red lips, Mr. Logan trembled down to his heels. He knew instinctively that the voice would be musical and modulated, and he was not disappointed.

"You had better bring me a clam paté, waiter," she said, "and some filet of sole, a bottle of Ostend water, some truffles, some caviare on toast, and a Chartreuse."

Then she glanced momentarily across the table and discovered the intent eyes of her companion. It seemed to him that he beheld somewhere in the glance the inkling of a smile.

The vague, subdued music rippled over the banked ferns, and the murmur of conversation went on all about them. The waiter came with "One-Round" Logan's dinner and served it perfectly. Later on, the goddess on the other side of the table was also served; and after awhile, she lifted a small, white hand, guiltless of jewelry, and held it poised uncertainly, while her eyes wandered about the damask cloth.

"Pardon me," said Mr. Logan, instantly. He handed Maisey the pepper.

"Thank you so much," she replied.

"Will you have the salt?" inquired the gentleman courteously.

"I think I shall," she said.

"And would you care for the paprika?"

"No thank you. I use paprika very rarely indeed."

Then she smiled. There is nothing flagrantly humorous about informing a stranger that you don't care for paprika, but nevertheless, Maisey Rooney smiled and so did "One-Round" Logan; and when two good-looking people begin conversing about food and smiling over it, the chances are that you could call it a conversation. From the salt-pepper-paprika stage, it was a simple move to other things. They passed on from edibles to egotism, from food to fundamentals and from gastronomics to gasoline.

"It is said that the terrapin here is excellent," suggested Mr. Logan. "Would you care for some?"

And before the terrapin was brought, she was addressing him as Mr. Logan and he was saying, "Pardon me, Miss Rooney."

It is not the part of any chronicler to pry impertinently into personal affairs nor is it of any interest to know

that Mr. Logan and Miss Rooney found each other charming and attractive. That they met again is nobody's business. Furthermore, there is no intention of going into the events and circumstances that brought them together thereafter, or of watching with impudent eyes the growth of mutual esteem into something more tender.

Mr. Joseph Logan, for excellent reasons, refrained from disclosing the fact that he was sometimes called "One-Round" and that his right hand was worth fifty thousand dollars. It was the one disquieting feature, the single disturbing fly in the ointment, and it troubled Maisey that Joseph spoke not of his affairs. She was certain that in good time he would take her fully into his confidence and she was content to wait. And in the meantime, she would wait, too. If Joseph were to remain silent, she would be silent, and when the day of confidences came, there would be two stories to tell.

On an evening when the chill in the air brought a tingle to the blood and the love of life flourished at its topmost, Maisey took Joseph by the arm and said:

"There is something I should like to do, Joseph."

"Command me," he replied gallantly. "The world is at your feet. Whatever you want to do, shall be done."

"I should like to dance, Joseph. It seems ages and ages since I danced. I can feel my feet skipping this very minute."

"But where?" he returned, somewhat puzzled. "I know of no dance this evening."

"Would it not be a great lark to go some place where we are not known? I have read in the newspapers that one is almost certain to find a dance on the East Side any evening. Those political clubs—social organizations—they give dances, do they not?"

"Maisey!" Joseph said, horrified.

"I know it is unconventional, but we would be unknown. I would like to mingle with the merry throngs and dance my heart out. What do we care? We are safe from criticism and we will come away early."

A gentleman invariably does as a lady asks him to do. Mr. Logan protested feebly, but consented; and an hour later, two good-looking young people might have been seen climbing the stair to the social rooms of the Mike Finnerty Ward A Democratic and Social Club. A dance was in progress and the strains of the band floated out upon the night air.

Mr. Logan preceded his lady and handed her things and his own to a man with a protruding jaw and a bullet-shaped head, the hair of which had been clipped close to the bone. They entered arm in arm and swung into a two-step. All about them were gay and festive young people, moving in the sinuous turkey trot. Terpsichore was having a beautiful night and the band was a good one.

After half an hour, Maisey, slightly flushed, desired a glass of water, and "One-Round" scurried away. A moment later, when he returned to the dance floor, his attention was instantly arrested. Maisey was distressed. Before her stood a bulky citizen in a check suit, demanding that she dance and emphasizing his demand in an ungentlemanly manner.

"Please go away," Maisey exclaimed.

"Rats," responded her annoyer.

The music was starting. Maisey turned, but the checked one caught her —and a second later something caught him. It was the celebrated right fist of "One-Round" Logan, and the person struck the floor instantly.

There was no time for calm conversation from that moment on. The man on the floor was an important factor in a certain political organization, and half of the males present were associated with him. The other half represented a different clan, and without pausing to go into the matter for details, the fall of Maisey's annoyer meant one thing—immediate war.

Before Mr. Logan could reach Maisey's side, the room was in uproar. Girls were shrieking and running to cover, because they had seen other small incidents start big affairs. By instinct, the two parties split and a revolver rang out. Bottles began to fly and chairs left the floor to be torn to pieces and

used as clubs. Within fifteen seconds of the fall of Mr. Check-suit, the dance of the Mike Finnerty Democratic and Social Club had become a battle, and the plaster was falling where bullets struck.

"My Gawd!" Maisey shrieked, dashing desperately towards the door. A line of fighting men stopped her, but behind her came "One-Round" Logan, swinging his fists, battering men to the ground with single punches and tearing a hole in the human wall. He seized Maisey about the waist and dragged her to a corner, where he tugged at a door that refused him.

"Holy mudder of mackinaw!" he gasped. "We'll all be murdered. W'y did we come to dis joint? I told yuh to keep away from dese hell-roarin' bums. I had more sense den you, but I didn't use it. Duck. Here comes a chair."

They ducked and the chair crashed into the wall above their heads. Maisey was crying.

"Dis is de toughest luck in me life," she muttered. "Some bum poked me in de ribs and I tink me ankle's sprained. Oh, get me outta here, Joe. Bust dat door down. Do somet'in'. I'm scared to de't'."

The door gave, and the two scrambled into an ante-room. "One-Round" had lost his collar and cravat; the front of his shirt was split open and one sleeve had been torn off. A tiny stream of blood trickled from a cut in his forehead, and his ear was bleeding.

Maisey's hat depended from one ear and her waist was torn in half a dozen places. She was a picture of utter woe and fear.

"Now le's git out quick before de cops land us," Mr. Logan said. "Dey'll be here in no time. Come on and beat it down de back stairs and don't stop fer nuttin, yuh hear."

"All right, Joe. Are yuh hurt?"

"No, I aint hurt. Jus' scratched."

Clinging to his arm, Maisey stumbled down the dimly lighted stairway and into the street. The noise of battle still roared above them, and a bell sounded in the distance, telling of the quick rush of the reserves. Walking hastily, the dismantled seekers after pleasure put the Mike Finnerty Social Club into the distance behind them. Then they began to breathe more easily and to slacken their pace.

They were thinking.

"Joseph," Maisey said slowly, "did you notice—"

"Certainly I noticed," he answered.

He turned and looked at her silently.

"Joseph," she said, "when the riot started, I forgot. All I could think of was that we were in danger of being killed. And you heard—you heard how I talked—the way I pronounced and everything?"

"Yes, and I let go too, didn't I? Well, I might as well finish it up, now that I've started. I'm 'One-Round' Logan, the champion light-weight scrapper, and the way you heard me talk while the battle was on was the way I've talked all my life until I got a language sharp on the West Side to straighten out the kinks and knots in my word-system. That's all."

"No, it isn't all," Maisey returned. "I am Maisey Rooney, who used to make hats and who never went to school; and the way *I* talked is precisely the way I used to talk when I worked twelve hours a day sewing lace into women's hats. You would never have known, but for—for the riot."

"Neither would you have known about my undistilled way of talking, but now, now that you do know, does it make any difference?"

"Not a bit," Maisey whispered, clasping "One-Round's" arm more tightly. "And does it make any difference to you?"

"None at all," he answered, bending over her. "Here comes a taxi. Let's get into it and get some whole garments before we are both pinched."

In the cab, Maisey tenderly wiped the blood from her cavalier's countenance.

"You're a wonderful fighter, Joe," she said, snuggling close to him.

The Tragedy of the Emerald Eye

Blue-Funk Carson tries to dissuade a young Englishman from a hair-brained attempt to steal a treasured emerald from its native owners. Carson fails; and later, as a consequence of the young fellow's fool-hardihood, he all but loses his own life.

By JOHN BARNETT

"IT'S a green stone as big as a pigeon's egg, an emerald, I'll swear, set in the forehead of a wooden god! What do you think of that, Blue-funk? Man, you risk your life every day in the swamps for a few pounds' worth of trade. This will be loot worth chancing one's worthless life for!"

The speaker was walking to and fro with shining eyes. He was a young Englishman of middle height. His face, despite certain faint traces of dissipation, was extraordinarily good to look at. Reckless and debonair, he suggested an English edition of *d'Artagnan*. There was breed in him from head to foot. His constitution and his slim, muscular body had defied a vile climate and the liberties their owner had taken so lightheartedly. Everyone liked him, men, women and children—especially women. Blue-funk Carson, long, gaunt and angular, surveyed the boy with lazy friendship from his deck chair.

"You'll get yourself into nasty trouble, Dicky!" he suggested.

"That will be no novelty," the boy answered, and spoke no less than truth.

"Assuming this yarn is moderately veracious," drawled Carson, "assuming there *is* such an emerald set in the forehead of a god—and, my word, it sounds like a lie of the first water!—"

"Oh, you're an unbelieving chap!" Dicky Kortright cried. "Haven't you been out here long enough to believe—?"

"To believe almost anything?" Carson interrupted quietly. "Well, yes, I have. There are more things in West Africa than are dreamt of in anyone's philosophy. I admit that. That's why I'm listening to you so patiently. Well, granted it's all true. Certainly, we know little enough about the country right up river. What then? Have you any plan?"

"My plan's nobly simple," the boy answered with one of his own smiles. "My game is to happen along casually into the village, pal up with the people (it's my one gift, pal-ing up with strangers!), and loot the emerald one dark night. When the worthy people wake from their innocent slumbers next morning, I and the emerald will be missing!"

Carson lit a cheroot with some daintiness.

"It's a wickedly simple plan," he drawled. "And a simply wicked one. You're a cold-blooded, immoral young scoundrel, Dicky. I never doubted that."

"Oh, you're no saint yourself!" Dicky cried. "There are queer stories enough about you—"

"If St. Francis of Assisi were living

in West Africa to-day," retorted Blue-funk Carson with calm complacency, "there would be queer stories told about *him!* Believe nothing you hear out here, Dicky, unless *I* tell it you! Anyhow, whatever I've had to do in my time, I don't make a practice of stealing from unsuspecting natives, or of stirring them up against white men!"

The boy smiled again like the gay-hearted young pagan he was.

"I rather regret that side of it myself," he admitted callously. "But it can't be helped. To speak melodramatically, you behold a desperate man! A chap who's as hard up as I am can't afford to worry about little moral trifles. I went to the tables last night and chanced my luck with my very last quid. And the gods responded. I shall just be able to fit out a canoe and hire a few ruffians of boys. And if this little flutter fails—well, I shall either have to cut my throat or take to honest work! I wonder which of the two would be more painful?"

"If it fails, you probably wont have the choice," Carson said more seriously. "I suppose you realize that you are taking your life literally in your hands? But of course you do; even you understand that untamed savages don't exactly encourage the looting of their gods. My boy, if you're caught you wont die pleasantly!"

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

"That goes without saying," he said, coolly. "In all commercial undertakings nowadays one accepts these trifling risks."

"I wonder if it *would* seem trifling when it came to the pinch?" Carson remarked, reflectively. "To be smeared with honey and pinned down on an ant heap, for example? I've faced the prospect of that myself in my time, and—it didn't appeal to me one little bit!"

"Personally, I don't propose to face it," Dicky Kortright broke in. "I shall have my revolver handy. If the worst comes to the worst, they don't take me alive. But all this is rather beside the mark. I'm here to persuade you to go partners in this flutter with me."

Carson shook his head.

"No," he said. "Not in my line, as I say."

Dicky with annoyance recognized finality in his tones.

"If I didn't know you, I would suggest that you were deterred by the trifling risks of the trip—" he began.

"And you would be quite right," Carson drawled. "I have a real horror of risks—always go out of my way to avoid 'em, on principle."

Dicky laughed, against his will.

"You old humbug!" he cried. "As though I didn't know you! You talk like that always, and yet—the only time you're really and truly happy is when the hair on other men's heads is standing up straight on end!"

"You have formed a strange misconception of my character," said Blue-funk Carson.

"Then I share it with a good many other people. But wont you really come into this game with me?"

"No. And if I thought it was the least use I'd try to persuade you against it. But I'll do this. I shall start up river myself in a week, and if I find you still alive and in a hole I'll do my best to help you out of it."

"Well, that's something," conceded Dicky Kortright.

"It's all I'll do," said Blue-funk Carson. "But the chances are—that you *wont* be alive!"

"You're cheery company to-day," the boy laughed. "Good-by."

They shook hands, and Carson, left alone, sucked thoughtfully at his cheroot.

"You're a graceless young scoundrel, but somehow you're oddly lovable," he reflected. "I wonder if I shall see you again!"

As it chanced, Carson *was* to see Dicky Kortright again, and the fashion of their meeting he will remember until he dies.

Far up the river, beyond the last tentacles of ever-advancing civilization, Carson had landed. He left Imbono and the boys with the canoe, and pushed through the forest with his gun in search of game for the pot. The country was entirely strange to him, but he knew that he must be near the village of Dicky Kortright's hare-brained, piratical quest, and he advanced with some caution. The people of that vil-

lage were said to be unfriendly to white men. But Carson had a promise to keep, and he made a practice of keeping his promises. He knew well that the chances were ten to one that the boy, if he still lived, was in sore need of help.

It was dark in the forest. Somewhere far above, the sun was shining brilliantly, but only an occasional golden shaft pierced down through the lofty canopy of tangled foliage. The giant trunks of the trees towered up through the gloom, and the eye strove in vain to follow the intricate cordage of vines and creepers that swept from trunk to trunk. There was something sinister about the dull, heavy light. Carson, iron-nerved and used to primeval forests as he was, was conscious of it. The bush seemed to reek of mysterious wickedness and cruelty. It appeared a fitting answer to his somber thoughts when suddenly from near at hand he heard a low, hopeless moan.

He pressed forward swiftly; the trees opened before him, and then, in a small circular clearing of bare trodden earth, he saw Dicky Kortright once again.

The boy was bound with outstretched hands against the trunk of a withered tree. He was naked from the waist upwards, and Carson sickened at the sight of his body; it was one hideous mass of wounds, to which clung clouds of flies. His face was drawn with long agony; the mouth drooped and the eyes were set in a glassy stare. The boy had been savagely tortured, and then tied up to die slowly from his wounds and from parching thirst. Above his head was nailed a plume of scarlet feathers, signifying that he was *ju-ju,* and that it was death for anyone to touch or aid him.

Just for a moment Carson stood transfixed with sheer horror, gazing at the piteous sight, remembering the handsome, reckless boy whom he had known and liked. Barely could he recognize him now. . . . Then with an oath of rage and pity he had sprung forward to Dicky Kortright's side.

The boy was very near to death. Carson cut the cords and laid him gently upon the ground; then he knelt beside him, moistening his lips with whisky and water from his flask. In a little while just a last flicker of strength came back to Dicky Kortright. It was characteristic of his gay, fearless life that it should come with the feeble ghost of a laugh. Dicky had always laughed, through good luck and through ill.

He recognized Carson.

"Hullo—Blue-funk, old man!" he whispered, with a faint chuckle. "Don't —say—I—told—you—so!"

"Better not try to talk till you're stronger, old chap," Carson said, gently. But Dicky strove to laugh again.

"I sha'n't get stronger," he muttered, with pauses between the words. "I'm going out. Very good of you—to look me up."

"I wish to God I'd come with you or kept you back!" Carson muttered.

But Dicky motioned for more whisky, and spent lavishly the fleeting strength it gave in a few broken sentences. His words came in hissing whispers; he was as near to death as a living man can be. But the old, light-hearted pluck still ruled the cruelly mishandled body.

"Glad you were out of it; no sense in two of us going out. You were right; it was a risky game. But it was—worth playing—no end of a lark! and I nearly pulled it off! The emerald's there all right: I saw it; I even touched it! The people had made me welcome. Rather low down to pay back their hospitality like that—perhaps. But I paid for it all right, with interest. The idol is in a big hut. I crept there one night. But the witch doctor had—smelt a rat. A nasty, suspicious devil! They took me from behind; no time to plug them or myself. My boys bolted, I fancy. That was—two rather long days ago. I've been—paying for my lark ever since."

He tried to smile, but only a spasm of pain crossed his face. His voice was weakening, trailing away significantly. Carson took his hands and held them.

"If there was only anything I could do, Dicky old man!" he muttered.

"You've kept your word," Dicky whispered. "No one else would have done as much."

"Is there any—message for anyone?" Carson asked. He knew that the time was short.

Dicky was flippant to the end.

"No messages! Sha'n't bother anyone

You see, it's not a case of one girl. It's several!"

But when he spoke again his voice was urgent.

"Clear out now, Blue-funk! You can't do anything more for me. It's death for you to stay; I'm *ju-ju,* and this is their beastly place of sacrifice. Please go, old man, please go!"

But Carson only said quietly, "Do you really think I'm going to leave you?"

And Dicky smiled for the last time.

"No—knew you wouldn't. So I must just—buck up and—die quickly!"

And he did not speak again. Carson had made his head as comfortable as he might upon his knee. He sat there fanning away the loathely flies. And perhaps half an hour later Dicky Kortright gave a little sigh and went out fearlessly upon the last and greatest adventure of his life.

Carson laid the dead man down and closed his eyes with reverence, and then for the first time he gave a thought to his own safety. And with the thought he realized that it had come too late.

There was a sudden yell and a rush of armed natives; they had crept close upon him from all sides. Carson was upon his feet with one bound, and his revolver was spitting fiercely. But the fight was hopeless from the first; the odds were too cruelly heavy. The white man strove to sell his life expensively. Two of his assailants he sent to join Dicky Kortright; a third dropped howling with a shattered thigh. Carson remembered Dicky's tortures, even in the turmoil of the fight, and was resolute not to be taken alive. But his assailants had their orders. The white man was borne down under a jam of foes. Cords were tightly swathed about his limbs; then he was lifted and carried away by winding native paths to a large village. Within an empty hut he was flung down and left alone to contemplate the fate that lay before him.

He almost welcomed the interruption to such thoughts that came at last. Anything was better than lying there, maddened by thirst, with cords that felt like red hot wires about his wrists and ankles, thinking, despite all his will power, of the torments he might have to bear. He expected no mercy, and he was wise. He had dared to assist a victim about whom the mysterious shadow of *ju-ju* had been cast. Death, probably in an awful shape, awaited such sacrilege.

Night had fully fallen when they came. The quiet of his prison was invaded by shadowy, chattering figures; the cords about his ankles were cut; he was jerked to his feet and dragged into the open air. It was a moonless night, but the street of the village was all a-flicker with torches. And now there fell a sudden ominous silence. All the village were there, men, women and youngsters, and all were gazing at the doomed prisoner. He contrived to bear himself coolly as ever; he would manage to die without shame, if he must die. Nothing was to be gained by whining. He looked about him steadily, when once his eyes grew accustomed to the flickering light. That was no devil, that gigantic, grotesquely hideous figure. Only a weak-nerved man would have been cowed by the sight of such an object. It was merely the witch doctor, cased from head to waist in a great mask and frame of wood. Carson speculated grimly as to how much blood the creature had already upon his filthy hands. They lived by blood and terror, these witch doctors, as he well knew: each village cowered beneath their corrupt, mysterious tyranny. A present, if big enough, spelled life or death. He wondered. . . . But the witch doctor had made a sign, and his guards were dragging Carson along the street.

To a large hut standing alone they led him. The witch doctor prostrated himself upon its threshold, groveling like a great snake before the eyes of the silent, staring villagers. Then he rose, and in obedience to his gesture Carson's guards forced the white man upon his knees, compelling him to grind his face upon the ground. Resistance was useless, as he knew well, but still the Englishman resisted. Only after a struggle did they force the bound white man to do reverence before the rude temple of their god. Then the witch doctor led the way within, and Carson between two guards was made to follow.

It was dark within the hut. Only one evil-smelling lamp gave a dim, mysteri-

ous light. But Carson was aware at last of the god that this village worshiped. At first he only saw a strange green flicker of light. Then he understood; this would be the great emerald for which Dicky Kortright had risked, nay, given, his life! Now his eyes saw more clearly. The jewel flashed from the forehead of a great uncouth idol very rudely carved of dark wood. God only knew how ancient was that idol, or what rivers of blood had flowed in its honor through the centuries! It seemed to glare mockingly, with cold hate, at the tall, lean white man, and he stared back as steadily. They stood for the new and the old; for clean things and for dark, mysterious sin.

The witch doctor had been dancing grotesquely before the idol. Now he halted with a sudden cry, stood for a moment as in rapt, worshiping attention, then turned and pointed to the open air.

Carson was hurried out by his guards. The witch doctor followed, and addressed the waiting people in a high, sustained scream. Carson was able to follow some of his words; it was his own fate that he was hearing. "The great god had spoken! The white man was to be bound to the tree of sacrifice, and left to expiate his sin." So he was to die of starvation. Half unconsciously he shrugged his shoulders, recognizing that his end might have been far more awful.

The people received the judgment with acclamation. A procession was hastily formed. The masked witch doctor led the way; then came the prisoner, stumbling among his guards. Behind followed all the village, brandishing torches, thumping drums, scaring the creatures of the forest with their strident, savage yells. The scene was worthy of a nightmare. Carson found himself wondering if it were all a horrible dream. But he tripped upon a root in the gloom, falling upon his knees, and one of his guards prodded him brutally with a spear, as a hint to walk with greater care. This was no dream.

The procession halted in the clearing wherein Dicky Kortright had met his end. To the same tree Carson was lashed with cruel straitness. His ankles were bound to pegs; cords were wound about his waist and neck. When it was finished, when the red *ju-ju* plume had been affixed above his head, Carson could scarcely move a muscle of his body. Already he was tortured by thirst and weak for want of food. So he was to stand, he knew, until his strength and life crept from him, or until the vultures and red ants realized his utter helplessness.

But he was not yet to be left alone. For hour after hour the villagers held savage revels in the clearing; for hour after hour the bound, doomed victim gazed upon barbaric dances and witnessed the celebration of hideous rites. Through all that time his ears were tortured by a sustained and raucous din. No notice was taken of him; he was treated now as one under *ju-ju* and already dead. Not until the gray dawnlight dimmed the torches did the concourse vanish. Then Blue-funk Carson was left to silence, to the torture of his cords, to the torture of thirst, until merciful death at last should stretch forth his hand.

The long hours that followed were always blurred in his memory. It is possible that he actually dozed in his bonds for a little while; but if so, the sun aroused him all too soon, like a red devil eager for torment. His head was bare; there was little sheltering shade. Then began real torture . . .

Carson was raving in delirium. For what seemed eternity he had gritted his teeth upon his agony. If that devil of a witch doctor or the guards were within earshot they should be gratified by hearing no cry of weakness wrung from him. So for a space he had endured. His tongue felt like a hot, swollen rag of leather; his head was splitting; his eyeballs seemed to swell and burn even under his closed lids; his limbs were at times numb and dead, and at times shot through with racking pains. And then at last his brain was mercifully dulled.

He thought that he was playing cricket far away in England. There was the rustle of a cool breeze through tall old elms; he could hear the ripple of a little stream. He longed to reach that stream, but something held back his

feet. The green, shaven field was clear before his eyes; the faces of the players were real to him; he laughed hoarsely in his bonds and was unconscious of all pain. . . .

And then his vision changed. He was in West Africa, speaking with a girl, a tall girl, whose brave, delicate face had haunted his sane dreams for months. Through all that time he had dreamed of seeing her again one day; now it seemed to his crazed brain that that dream was realized.

Carson spoke aloud. His voice would have been very gentle but for its piteous hoarseness. His eyes were tortured no longer. There was a look in them that few had ever seen.

"Dear," he said, "I've come back—at last. I always meant to come back to you. But the time has been very long. I can speak now. Is there—is there anything you can say to me?"

Who can say what he believed he heard in answer? But the bound man smiled, and there came a rare happiness to his thin face that was in strange contrast to its usual lazy calm.

And then for a while his delirium passed and he awoke to pain. Only the cords sustained him now; the weight of his body was upon his neck and his swollen arms. He drooped limply with slack knees. His eyes were dull, bloodshot and painful. No human being was in sight, but living creatures were not lacking. At his very feet there crouched a huge vulture, gazing up at him with horrid, chilly eyes that seemed to calculate his strength. Carson shivered slightly, and became aware of two more hideous birds of prey perched upon a branch near to his head. They seemed to know their hour was near. . . .

He thought of Imbono: he wondered what he was doing. If he knew of his master's plight he would risk his own life with supreme carelessness for his rescue. Carson was well assured of that. But he could know nothing. Well, it was better so. No sense in sacrificing Imbono too. Carson in his agony felt dully thankful that he had led no one save himself into this plight. . . . And with the thought a kindly stupor brought him relief from pain. . . .

It was evening when he opened his eyes once more. The sun had vanished—oh, thank God, for that! The light was dull, or it might be that his eyes were failing fast. But surely that was a step? Yes, a huge, weird figure was approaching him across the clearing. Carson realized that the witch doctor in his grotesque mask had come to gloat upon his victim.

He did not greatly care; he troubled about very little now. Life was flickering very low in his sorely tried body. Only—he *was* just conscious of a dull longing for vengeance upon this cowardly torturing devil! Not a very appropriate thought for a dying man, perhaps, but Carson was always a good hater.

The witch doctor was beside him now, looming huge in the dim light. Carson tried to speak and failed. And then—it seemed to the Englishman that his brain was delirious once more, for the witch doctor spoke—in Imbono's voice!

"You no cry out," he muttered. "Dere may be plenty niggers near in woods. I going cut you loose."

There was a knife in his hand, and both the knife and the hand were red and wet with blood. Imbono chuckled savagely.

"I been spying about in woods. Found you at last. Den I met dat debbil of witch doctor. He die quick, much too quick, worse luck! But his mask come in berrah dam useful for me!"

Carson could not speak; the last of his strength seemed to have been snapped by this sudden reaction. But in his heart there was a wonderful warmth of gratitude and affection for this ruffianly, ever faithful servant of his. Undiluted Arab blood may have its failings, but a very little of it can give a black man the quality of loyalty till death.

Imbono cut the cords, and swung up his limp master in his great arms.

"We clear out now. Not far to canoe. Trust to luck. But if we meet any dirty niggers—by God, dey no take us alive—!" And then Carson seemed to slip away definitely into utter darkness. . . .

It was a long fortnight before he realized that Imbono had brought him through.

A New Year Silhouette

The gay New Year's Eve revels on the streets of New York form the background of this engaging little romance—wherein one learns how consummately important may be so slight a thing as the shadow of a man and woman cast upon a window shade.

By ELIZABETH PAYNE

ON New Year's Eve, Ferguson was diligently persuading himself that he felt an unqualified relief at having no jollification on hand. A sinister commiseration was his for those unfortunates who were at this moment plowing tortuous ways through sharp-elbowed throngs on Broadway, dodging assaults of idiotic "ticklers" and ear-splitting tin horns, or guzzling themselves into a sick to-morrow in stifling restaurants.

He jabbed savagely at the cannel in the grate, and a flare of flame shooting upward revealed his thin, strongly lined face with discontented gaze fixed on the coals, an ancient pipe, cold and unsavory, gripped in the accustomed groove of his teeth.

Those who were going to celebrate the passing of the year were gathering now in the restaurants. Longacre Square, despite the storm, would be ablaze with light. Taxies would be dashing recklessly into the riotous thoroughfare from quiet side streets. Head waiters would be importantly hectoring swarms of black-coated subordinates with distracted eyes and anticipative palms. Acres of white-damasked tables would be neatly ranged in rows with chairs suggestively tipped forward against them. Armies of gold-capped champagne bottles would be lying in icy ambush, ready to advance in cohorts of destruction upon the mad and merry multitude.

Oh, well! A year ago he had been celebrating too—he and *she*—shut away felicitously in the semi-seclusion of a palm-embowered corner; his back to the forgotten revelry beyond; her eyes, now dancing at some outrageous breach of conventionality behind his shoulders, now softening consciously at the message of his own eyes, the while a sentimental chorus of the hour wailed itself sensuously from the violins.

Ferguson kicked back the leather chair and strode across to his heaped writing table. Switching on the electric light, he jerked open a brass-knobbed drawer and from the innermost recesses thereof drew forth a lumpy package. Within the wrapping was a gaudy paper motto—a tawdry thing of silver lace and glittering fringe, its torn cover loosely wrapped around a folded bit of green and pink tissue which, unfolded, revealed itself as an absurdity of a bonnet with fluttering paper streamers and rakish rosettes over the ears.

He had tied the flimsy paper streamers of the thing under her chin and she had laughed. . . . And her laugh had rung low like the rich notes of a

'cello beneath the lilting melody wailed by the violins.

Ferguson reached hastily toward the electric light. If he was going to sniffle like a homesick schoolboy because he was lonely and forgotten on New Year's eve, he preferred not to witness the emotional exhibition in an unsympathetic chiffonier glass opposite. Instead, he pulled himself together with a determined shrug and walked to the window.

Great Scot! This was no snowstorm; it was a blizzard! Out beyond the corner in the open square the wind tore by at sixty miles an hour. In the street just below, the paving stones were swept bare and clean, while back in basement areas and dooryards drifts were piling man-high. Shimmering blue haloes around the arc lights ringed weird and ghostly circles in the swirl of whiteness. A trolley car stopped at the crossing and then whizzed on downtown, the impatient clang of its gong an imperious defiance of the obstructing element.

The uproarious din of the Broadway carnival could not penetrate this far-uptown neighborhood, but occasionally the muffled bellow of a tin trumpet came through the thickened air, and every car and limousine fighting a way downtown was packed with enthusiastic would-be revelers. But what a night, even on gaudily lighted, snow-ploughed Broadway! What a New Year's eve! A bit of great luck, indeed, that the Montclair friends had telephoned they would not risk bringing the car over to town in such a storm. What a fool stunt, anyway, to celebrate Happy New Year with a bawling bunch of bibblers! Happy New Year indeed!

High up in an apartment house diagonally opposite, two lighted windows were within Ferguson's range of vision; and Ferguson gazed across the shifting white veil of snow and through the barrier of those drawn window shades. What he saw was this: a green-carpeted room, a book-laden table flanked by low chairs under the glow of a lamp, an open piano piled with music, a many-cushioned couch, the red gleam of firelight calling out gay response from copper tea-kettle and chafing dish and trifles of brass scattered over a writing desk.

A year ago—ye gods! what possessed him to-night to indulge himself in these sickly-sentimental reminiscences? Broken friendships were not things to spoil a man's whole life.

What if he had been exacting?—She had been unreasonable, heaven knew! What if he had overestimated his right to dictate? She knew—she must have known that a definite understanding between them hovered on the brink of every golden moment. . . .

It was at this particular moment that one of the shades veiling the windows diagonally opposite was raised and a woman peered anxiously out into the storm.

Against the glow of lamp and firelight she looked to be a slip of a thing, with soft hair coiled high on a head rather proudly held. Ferguson could not see more than this shadowy silhouette, but well he knew the eyes of her—brown and tender. Well he knew the smile of her—gay for welcome. What a pal she was! Grave and sweet for sympathy—what a friend she was!

What did pride matter? What did the right or wrong of the thing matter? What did anything matter? He wanted her—*her!* He wanted to see her eyes laugh again, like the laughing of a little brook over brown pebbles. He wanted the dainty, fresh fragrance of her hair in his face again, to intoxicate his senses. He wanted the soft sweetness of her in his arms. He wanted—

Another car came clanging to a stop at the crossing, and a rubber-coated messenger boy climbed off and ploughed through the drifts to the entrance of an apartment house diagonally across the way, a long white pasteboard box gripped beneath his arm.

She had vanished from the window but she had neglected to draw the shade, and presently Ferguson saw her advancing across the lamp-lighted room with a long white pasteboard box in her arms.

American Beauties! Just like Janeway's hulking clumsiness to send *her* American Beauties—flaunting things, whose exaggerated stems bespoke their

excessive expensiveness. Now he, Ferguson, would have smothered her in violets. The green-walled room would have been pervaded by the sweetness of their spiritual suggestion.

An illuminating flash of inspiration blazed across Ferguson's horizon of gloom.

Why not violets now? Any man might send a woman violets at New Year's. Perhaps she would be touched by their reminiscent message. Perhaps—

Pride in sulkily protesting habit lifted its ugly head, but Ferguson kicked it back to place. Pride had made enough mischief between them—and it was Janeway who had profited.

Ferguson hated Janeway with a frank and unapologetic contempt which was quite apart from his immediate cause of resentment. He hated him for his suave and indirect business manners, and despised him for inconsequent trifles of personality—for the accurate nicety with which Janeway's thin hair was parted in the center; for the precise and out-toed lightness with which he stepped.

Ferguson knew too that Janeway was an irrepressible philanderer. There were half a score of feminine names on his florist account and always would be—bachelor or benedict.

What Janeway needed was elbowing. Ferguson got into ulster and overshoes with a celerity impelled by the enthusiasm of newly aroused purpose. For twenty dollars, one ought to get something fairly substantial in violets—even on New Year's eve. Now twenty dollars was twenty dollars to Ferguson—and no bagatelle; but there, across the street, were Janeway's American Beauties, and if Janeway was to be successfully submitted to the afore-mentioned treatment, the shoving would have to be hard, however expensive.

Storming down the four flights of stairs, Ferguson plunged out into the snow-vexed night—and came face to face with her, waiting for a downtown trolley car!

Her eyes shone like brown stars behind a chiffon veil which was tied over her hat, and beneath one arm she hugged a well-stuffed music roll.

A chilly bend of the veil-swathed head and the instantly presented back view of a belted storm-coat rewarded Ferguson's tentative attempt at a greeting. He swung about, disregarding the approaching trolley car, and ploughed savagely down the avenue for three blocks; then, buffeted past patience by the wind, he boarded the next car that came along.

Which was a pity, for he missed seeing the sparkle in two brown eyes dimmed by a mist of tears, and the distressed trembling of five little fingers which first tendered the conductor a penny and then confusedly dropped the change from a quarter on the slushy floor.

The violets having been ordered in extravagant profusion, and implied doubts of their immediate delivery imperiously set aside, Ferguson took under reminiscent consideration the matter of the music-roll.

So this New Year's eve she would be singing at midnight service—and not laughing into Janeway's eyes across a white-damasked tablecloth, with a green and pink tissue bonnet tipped saucily on her bronze hair. This year things were going to be different with *her,* too.

Very likely Janeway would be at the church to see her home—of course he would; but there was no law prohibiting anybody else from sitting back in the shadow under the choir gallery, to hear the midnight music as the Old Year passed.

But Ferguson, back in the shadows, listening with rapt and uplifted spirit to the perfect harmonies that flooded the vaulted arches above him, and straining his ear for the rich contralto cadences that proved her share of the anthem, looked in vain for Janeway's sleekly groomed head in the pews round about.

Neither was Janeway waiting in the vestibule when the service broke up. Nor was there any sign of Janeway without, in the snow-choked street. Where the devil *was* Janeway, anyhow? What was he doing? Philandering, more than likely.

There shot across Ferguson's mind a memory of young Olcott using the

telephone that day in the booth next his, at the Breslin. Young Olcott had a bellow like a bull—and now that Ferguson came to think of it, young Olcott was also Janeway's confidential secretary. So that was why young Olcott had been thundering out a dictatorial demand for a reservation—at whatever price, so that it was a table in a quiet corner. Ferguson recalled his exasperation at the unescapable tones during his own important business confab.

But blamable as Janeway's absence undoubtedly was, Ferguson devoutly thanked him for his delinquency. Willingly or not, she should accept Ferguson's protection this night. No woman should be allowed to face the fury of such a storm alone.

He saw her shrink as she came out onto the porch. During the two hours of the service the wind had increased its fury, and now the snow was driving in horizontal sheets. The screaming blasts tore now this way, now that, snatching at drifts scarce fallen and piling them again in new places.

The gay voices of the choir, calling New Year greetings to each other as they separated, had a weird sound in the muffled air. From afar came the clamor with which New York welcomes the New Year's promise: the roar of many voices, the blast of tin trumpets, the shriek of steam whistles in the harbor, the scream of automobile horns. Several young people lingered to put the veil-swathed contralto with the dancing brown eyes on her car, and Ferguson, unobserved amid the merry crew, kept close behind. He heard her steady refusal of escort home, her laughing protest that the trolley line passed within three doors of her apartment, and her plea of a headache in answer to enthusiastic demands that she join in a little New Year celebration across town.

"If you take my advice," she called back blithely over the conductor's shoulder, "you'll all get home while the trolleys are running—taxies will come high this night."

Ferguson, his ulster collar turned up around his face, huddled unnoticed on the glass-enclosed platform. The car began to move uptown slowly, preceded by a thrashing snow plough.

One by one the passengers got off and vanished into the encompassing whiteness. When a single couple was left, far at the front of the car, Ferguson went inside and seating himself directly opposite the lady of the chiffon veil, produced an evening paper from his ulster pocket and retired with apparent unconcern behind it.

He would have been immensely gratified if he had perceived the flicker of relief in her face at sight of his familiar broad shoulders and keen, strongly-lined face; but the edge of the sporting page was above his range of vision, and after that one brief glance, she kept her eyes determinedly away from him, twisting her neck in a futile endeavor to peer through round peepholes made by her warm finger-tip on the frosted window-pane.

By and by the conductor came into the car, closed the doors and stood with his back against them.

"Guess we aint a-goin' t'make it," vouchsafed he affably.

"Think not?" responded Ferguson, folding his paper nicely at another page.

"Naw—looks like we's a-goin' to be held up this side the junction. They aint a cah passed us sence we lef'—'way down t' Seventy-thoid Street."

"Don't say!" returned Ferguson with conspicuous concern. He saw her eyes, through the chiffon veil, anxiously searching the conductor's face. She was going to be in a nice fix presently; and the certainty of it gratified Ferguson.

The car slid, after a series of jerks, to a standstill; and with a parting bang of the doors, the conductor vanished into the storm. Presently they limped on again with maddening leaps and pauses as the snow-plough ahead forged a panting way through the drifts.

The couple at the farther end got out, shouting relieved congratulations to each other as they waded knee-deep to the curb and climbed some adjacent doorsteps. Ferguson no longer perused the evening editorials. He sat back with folded arms, his eyes fixed abstractedly on the advertisements above the opposite windows.

At last she looked up resentfully.

"You followed me!" she accused him.

"I did," admitted Ferguson blandly.

"By what right?" demanded she.

"By the right of every decent man to offer his protection to a woman he knows—"

"You don't know me," she corrected with dignity.

"Pardon me," returned Ferguson evenly. "*You* don't know *me*. But that is a side issue. It does not in the least affect my duty toward you as—as a woman."

"Oh, indeed!" retorted she. "Playing knight-errant is a pretty rôle; but really,"—with a languid consideration of the empty car,—"I see no damsel in distress here."

Then she froze him with:

"I am quite capable of taking care of myself, thank you—without anybody's officious interference."

"Oh, certainly," admitted her protector hastily. "I had no intention whatever of interfering. But you cannot prevent my remaining in your vicinity in the event of your encounter with overwhelming obstacles. And," he added bluntly, descending from the high horse of his knight-errantry to the attitude of plain man, "that's what I intend to do."

The dimples were chasing each other in and out now, beneath the chiffon veil, but she kept her voice icy—as icy, that is, as a warm contralto voice may make itself.

"I am afraid," she murmured with civil regret, "that you are putting yourself to a good deal of inconvenience for very small personal satis—"

"Hello! Wonder what's up?" interrupted Ferguson rudely. He had suddenly awakened to a consciousness that the car was standing still—had been standing still for some time—and that from both platforms its minions had basely fled. He stepped outside to reconnoiter, and after a moment came back to her, snow-sprinkled from head to foot.

"We're stalled," he announced with almost too obvious satisfaction. "There are four cars ahead and two snow-ploughs, all stuck fast. Now will—"

"Well," she observed with composure, "I suppose the only sane thing to do is to sit here until they can go on again."

"But they can't go on," remonstrated he. "Even the ploughs are buried truck-deep in drifts. It's a matter of all night here, or taking a chance on stopping a taxi."

The lady made no reply. The only sound was the diabolical spatter of snow against the windows.

After a bit she pushed back her veil and looked squarely at him.

"You can do just as you please," she told him sweetly. "*I* intend to sit here and wait for them to go on. I have perfect confidence"—firmly—"in the ability of the transit company to get cars through under any circumstances."

The veil was let down again.

"You'd better go," she advised in a final manner, "—if you are feeling so nervous."

Ferguson sat down again and, folding his arms, gazed earnestly at the floor. His attitude was that of a man who is good for any length of time demanded by the circumstances.

Despite the exaggerated quiet of his exterior, however, the heart of him was bounding like a boy's. No matter what the morrow might bring, to-night he was part of her life—given a sacred guardianship of her welfare by the friendly intervention of the storm. He offered a mute libation to old Boreas, whose intelligent fury had blown this luck his way.

Suddenly the electric lights went out, not only in their car but in the string of other cars ahead. They stayed out.

"Power's off," commented Ferguson placidly.

There was no reply to this from the veiled shadow opposite, but the agitated tap of a small boot-toe on the car flooring betrayed the fact that the lady's impassive calm was not all it seemed.

With the lights went the heat. The car grew frigid. Ferguson's feet were like lumps of ice. He wondered how much longer she was going to sit in that unbending silence. He knew well enough she was not that sort of woman—there wasn't a sulky drop of blood in her veins. Good Lord! How she must have

grown to detest him in these months—to be able to maintain this stiff reserve! His high spirits began to sink . . . If she was really engaged to Janeway—

The conductor banged open the doors.

"Say," he called to the two motionless black blots within the dimness of the car, "ef youse two is goin' t' spend Noo Yeh's here, youse'll freeze t' deat', believe *me*."

"Aren't you going on?" came from one of the blots in an indignant contralto.

"Can't do it, loidy. The drifts is too deep for the plough. She's give up."

"Then can't you dig us out?"—imperiously.

"Wid what? Our fingernails? Say! Ef the plough is giv up, we gives up—see?"

"Then what are you going to do?" demanded his passenger in an aggrieved tone.

"We're a-goin' t' leave her right here—sure, it's the only thing we *can* do. The car-barn is t'ree blocks above. Ef youse aint got no home nor friends nigh here, youse"—hospitably—"kin come there along wid me."

"I shall see the lady safely home," hastily assured a rich barytone from the other blot. Whereupon the minion of the transit company, relieved of further responsibility, stamped away.

Ferguson stood up.

"Come, Virginia," he said.

"Come where?" she demanded, and her voice shook a little. "We can never in the world get across all those streets against this storm—the car hasn't even turned into our avenue yet."

"No, we can't get home," admitted Ferguson. "You would never be able to make it, and there's small chance of securing a taxi to-night, even if I can find a place open, to 'phone for one. But I know where we are," he went on, "and if you will allow me,"—gently,—"I'm going to take you to my brother-in-law's—the Dominie, you know. It's only a half dozen blocks over, and he and Kate will be all kinds of proud to take care of you till the storm lets up a bit."

He looked at her anxiously.

"Will you, Virginia?" he asked. "You have met Kate, you know—and we can't stay here. The man is right; we'd freeze."

"Yes," she agreed, with surprising meekness for one but recently so self-reliant. "You—you are very kind to think of it. I'll be glad to go."

On the car step Ferguson turned and carefully drew up her coat collar. (How good it was thus to be caring for her comfort again!) His fingers brushed her chin as he buttoned the collar-strap across, and both of them thought suddenly of the tying of a pair of green tissue bonnet strings just a year ago. Then, a little breathless, they started out.

It was far worse than Ferguson had anticipated. It was so very bad that he would have relinquished willingly even this precious chance of being with her to have had her again safe and sound in the shelter of her home. They floundered on, knee-deep, sometimes against the wind, sometimes driven helplessly before it. The snow stung their faces and blinded their eyes. The biting cold numbed hands and feet. No vehicle of any kind passed them. The streets seemed deserted, the arc lamps blinking desolately in a swirl of driving snow-eddies.

Twice he trampled a path for her through drifts almost breast-high. Once he lifted her bodily and bore her half a block, setting her down finally in the shelter of a deep doorway where he held her, panting, against a pillar.

"Virginia," he protested, "you can't go on. You're done up. Let us go into one of these big apartment houses where at least it is warm. You can sit in the hall—there's always a boy at the switchboard, and perhaps I can get a taxi—"

She shook her head, smiling valiantly up at him though she was almost too breathless to speak.

"I'd hate it," she demurred, "—waiting in a poky hall for goodness knows how long. No, let's push on. It can't be much further—where are we?"

He told her the precise locality.

After a moment she inquired, with obviously detached interest:

"Isn't the Albemarle around here somewhere?"

"Next block."

"Ah. . . . !"

"Friends there?"

"No—yes—I was just asking."

Now in the Albemarle, most expensive of modern apartments in the upper Nineties, dwelt a certain little widow known to Ferguson and to Janeway and to others—but chiefly to Janeway. Evidently, thought Ferguson grimly, to Virginia too. She was a very pretty little widow, still in crêpe, and it was not Janeway's liberal salary that attracted her, for she had plenty of money of her own. Ferguson had opined that it was the dollars that attracted Janeway.

The windows of the widow's apartment—most expensive in the expensive building—flanked the massive front portico on the east, and from one or another of them might be seen peering, with pathetic frequency, the wistful eyes of a small, fluffy dog, gazing, paws on sill, at unimprisoned folk who enjoyed the freedom of out-of-doors.

There had been a time when the tires of Janeway's car had worn more enthusiastic grooves in the asphalt before the massive portico, and all Janeway's world and the widow's—and without doubt the widow herself—had believed him to be indubitably hers. But there is nothing indubitable except a wedding ring where such a susceptible fancy as Janeway's is concerned; and this winter that fancy, as Ferguson knew, and as Virginia knew, had been wandering farther north than the Albemarle.

Nevertheless, Ferguson had concluded, from occasional happenings upon confidential twilight confabs in a certain orange-treed tea-room near Longacre Square, and from other happenings upon congenial little dinners in a famous—and secluded—restaurant near Washington Square, the widow's fascinations still prevailed, and she was at least making it rather hard for Janeway to break away.

The constitutional trouble with Janeway was his tendency to temporize, and his fastidious abhorrence of anything so emotional as "scenes."

"Virginia," blurted out Ferguson, giving utterance to the question that had so long tortured his days, "are you engaged to Janeway?"

"Yes," she whispered back, "I am." Something in her voice—something that ought never be in the voice of a happy fiancée—made Ferguson's arm, without conscious volition of his own, close suddenly round her. And she turned her cheek in a little tired, relieved way against his shoulder, hiding her face in the snow-wet roughness of his ulster.

So they stood for a blessed moment, Ferguson frowning with set teeth, at the storm sweeping past.

"I was so lonely, Phil," she complained plaintively—to his ulster—"and so—so *ashamed*. And I wanted to show myself how little I cared—"

"And me!"

"Yes—and you." She lifted her eyes from the friendly ulster and peered at him from under the chiffon veil.

"Did it matter—to you—Phil?"

Ferguson's frowning gaze never left the driving snow.

"It's been—hades," he said through his shut teeth.

Again her eyes were hidden in the ulster, and a small wet glove went creeping up Ferguson's arm and clung convulsively to his shoulder. But Ferguson stood very still, frowning out at the storm.

"Where is he to-night?" came from behind his teeth presently.

"At his mother's—out in Orange. I had to sing at midnight service. I—I didn't care to—to celebrate, this year." She choked over the words. "So he went over to Orange to see the Old Year out with his mother. It was," with dignity, "my own suggestion."

"Humph!" commented Ferguson. He was recalling vividly young Olcott in an adjoining telephone booth, shouting for a table reservation—at any price.

Was it not—putting aside all personal considerations—the simply decent thing to do, to interfere for Virginia's sake in an engagement which Janeway evidently held so lightly?

And suddenly, out of the heart of the storm, an illuminating impulse came to him, and began to take quick shape in his brain. He felt the convulsive clasp of the small hand on his shoulder but scarcely heard her tremulously continuing apology for Janeway.

"Of course, he couldn't guess it was

going to be a night like this. . . . And the church is right on our car-line. I often run back and forth alone at night. . . . And, anyway, I'm *glad,* Phil, glad it happened; glad you followed me, glad"—her words followed each other impetuously—"glad we're friends again."

"Friends—!" Ferguson caught his breath and looked down at her lifted face, white and weary but content, against his arm. *She*—Janeway's!

At something furious and primitive in his eyes, she drew herself upright and began to adjust the loosened veil over her hat.

"We ought to get on, ought we not?" she said uncertainly. "It must be fully two o'clock and I don't want to rouse up your sister's family at any more outrageous hour than I have to."

"Oh—Kate!" He laughed happily. He knew he could count on Kate.

They pushed on again, close together through the drifts, with heads bent low to the wind.

They passed the Albemarle on the opposite side of the street. The massive pile loomed high, fringed with snow on sill and cornice, and from many of its windows, still graced with wreaths of Yuletide holly, light gleamed cheerfully.

One window there was, just east of the imposing portico, on whose drawn shade a shadow moved. Ferguson's eye, roving past, suddenly hovered, focused and fixed.

That faultless profile with glass-bestridden nose—that pose of graceful, condescending gallantry—whose but Janeway's?

Opportunity, they say, knocks once at every man's door, but Ferguson felt no overmastering impulse to grasp at this strange chance by which Fate, more skillfully than the most adroit strategic move of human agency could have arranged, was presenting indisputable evidence of Janeway's defection. For one appalled instant he stopped short, his gaze riveted on the silhouette across the street; then all the chivalry within him rose tumultuously and he caught his companion's arm, impelling her forward.

"Come," he urged anxiously, "it's only a block now. Keep up your courage, Virginia—"

"Wait!" commanded she imperiously. She too had stopped short and was bending a little forward, her eyes riveted on the window opposite.

"It's *Harold!*" she whispered incredulously. The shadow on the shade wavered and they both stared, fascinated. Janeway appeared to be standing between the window and a low-placed electrolier. In his hands he held a small, flat object which looked like a box. As they gazed, he snapped open the box-lid and lifted out with finger and thumb what was unmistakably a woman's bracelet. So distinct was the shadow cast—and so much enlarged from the position of the light behind, that even the serrated pattern of the heavy gold circlet was sharply defined in silhouette.

Now any man may present as trifling a bauble as a bracelet to a woman friend as a New Year's remembrance. There is no particular significance in such a gift—unless the man happens to belong to some other woman. Then there is a good deal of significance in the proffered token—especially to the other woman. Virginia stood tense and rigid, buffeted by the gale but never removing her petrified gaze from that astounding pantomime.

Attracted perhaps by the beauty of the trinket, perhaps in response to Janeway's becks and wreathed smiles, a second shadow now glided upon the shade—a shadow of opulent curves and of cloudy hair whose warm hue Ferguson could almost feel, out in the storm.

And fastened against the most opulent of the curves, as the silhouette revealed, was a cluster of unmistakably sumptuous roses.

"American Beauties!" gasped a still, small voice at Ferguson's shoulder; and though one of the watchers did not know it, her hand clutched desperately at a woolly ulster sleeve; and though the other watcher did not know it, his hand, moving protectingly around the waist of a belted stormcoat, was clenched into a furious fist.

The shadow of the gentleman slipped the shadow of the bracelet upon the plump shadow of the lady's arm, and in

pantomimic silhouette it was evident that he was performing an ancient and honorable rite which concerns the presentation of bracelets.

"Wishing it on!" snapped a small, indignant voice behind a chiffon veil; and to Ferguson's acute ear there was more of contempt than anguish in the exclamation.

And then . . . one of the shadows did exactly what might also have been expected under the circumstances. It stooped over the other shadow and received a grateful "Happy New Year" proffered in the good old-fashioned way.

A light gleamed cheerily from the second story windows of the ministerial domain. Evidently Mr. and Mrs. Dominie had been seeing the old year out with a little personal celebration of their own. Ferguson dragged his well-nigh exhausted charge up the snow-buried front steps. Before he pushed the electric button he turned valiantly toward her.

"Virginia," he demanded, *"are you engaged to Janeway?"*

His hand slipped into her muff and closed over hers.

"Because," he went on, trying to peer under the drooping chiffon veil, "if you were, it was a bogus engagement, you know. Because, you know, you had not a particle of right to be. Because all the time, at heart, you have belonged to me. Wasn't it so, Virginia?"

For answer, her fingers clung the tighter to his, in the muff, and she sobbed a little—from dead weariness and live happiness—against the sleeve of his ulster.

"Let's," he said, "let's rub it into Janeway hard. Let's"—with a fine air of having that instant conceived the brilliant inspiration—"let's get my dominie brother-in-law to marry us right here—this morning; and spend the first day of the most wonderful New Year that ever happened in that dear little old green room of yours."

Which they did—encompassed by the pervasive benediction of half a thousand violets whose subtle suggestion had elbowed a paltry dozen American Beauties down a dumb-waiter to cheer the janitor's holiday repast.

Brothers From Tennessee

By HAPSBURG LIEBE

THEY kept well to themselves, these brothers, these two Tennessee mountaineers. But they soldiered faithfully, never grumbling no matter how strict the discipline or how hard the duty, taking long and galling hikes with the best of grace; so neither the officers nor the enlisted men of the company found fault with them for their evident wish to hold aloof from making intimate friendships. They were of a people apart; that was the long and the short of it; they were—different. I cannot say that they were better than the rest of us; nor can I say that they were worse than the rest of us. They were just different. We called them Big Torrey and Little Torrey to distinguish them, given names having long fallen into disuse.

One morning when the broiling Philippine sun was doing its utmost to shrivel us there in little, crescent-shaped Balingau, which is on the northern coast of Samar, a Mauser bullet came whining from the range of hills behind the town and crashed through the heart of Little Torrey with a distress-

ingly sickening *Snk!* Little Torrey was walking post number one, in front of the hut of bamboo and nipa which served as a guardhouse; Big Torrey was sitting in the doorway polishing his bayonet; I was lying on my back in the shade of an ylang-ylang, fanning myself with my battered campaign hat. I heard the whine and the thud of the bullet. I saw Little Torrey's hands release his rifle, saw the rifle fall over his shoulder and to the ground before he fell. And then, at the same time, there came the wicked report of the Mauser and a bitter oath—the first oath I had ever heard come from Big Torrey's lips.

He ran to where his brother lay with his face turned to the red-hot sun. He tore open the blue shirt below the throat, saw and understood perfectly. He knelt, and for a moment looked into the half-closed black eyes as though he would read some parting message in them; then he smoothed back with pitiful affection the damp, dark hair from the already clammy forehead, and went to his feet. His jaw muscles were taut; his face was ashen with a deep and terrible anger.

Men began to gather about the fallen soldier, and soon the entire company had gathered there. Big Torrey stood with his arms folded, gaunt and silent, and stared with burning eyes toward the range of hills. We sympathized with him, this raw-boned mountaineer—the Torreys having been so devoted to each other, so nearly inseparable, caused us to have an unusual sympathy for the one who was left. But we did not tell Big Torrey of this feeling; we knew he would not hear us if we spoke; and there was something in his face which forbade us to speak. Even the Captain was silent.

A hole was dug under a seraya tree, and a crude casket was made. Captain Burch, heaven rest his soul, took down our one flag, and with his own hands draped it about the lifeless young son of Tennessee's everlasting hills. Then we lowered the box into the hole. The men who had borne it from quarters wore white gloves, mementoes of regimental parades in Manila; as some fraternal orders do on similar occasions, these men threw their white gloves after the box. There being only our one company in Balingau, no chaplain was available. The captain opened a little Book and read out something; then he murmured a few halting words with his face turned upward. Big Torrey was kneeling by his company commander's side; he caught the captain's hand and pressed it in a great and wordless gratitude when the simple prayer was over. Then came the shoveling, and the three volleys, and "Taps."

And somehow we felt that the bugle was sounding for Big Torrey as well as for his brother.

During twilight that evening, when the insects were humming and the iguanas gaggling in the bamboos, Captain Burch looked up from his open steamer-trunk to see the tall, raw-boned figure of Big Torrey standing in the doorway. The mountaineer's face showed a certain pallor beneath his short and ragged black beard; his black eyes were as hard as the steel of his rifle; his jaw was out a little, and set hard.

Big Torrey walked into the hut, the floor creaking under his weight. He didn't salute. The captain did—from force of habit.

"Captain," announced the soldier in his soft drawl, but with a desperate ring to his voice, "I want a month off."

"A—a month off!" The officer smiled faintly, and went slowly to his feet.

"A month off," repeated Big Torrey, his gaze straight toward the eyes of his superior.

"I'm afraid," replied Captain Burch, "that what you ask is impossible."

"Then I want pe'mission to do a little scoutin' on my own hook," pursued the mountaineer.

The Captain's smile all went. He knew, now. Big Torrey wished to avenge the death of his brother! Captain Burch shook his head and seemed pained; it was very evident that he regretted to refuse anything to this man who had been so good, so faithful, a soldier.

"I understand, Torrey," he said. "I understand. But what could you do, a lone man, against Beltran Angga and

his fifty or sixty cut-throats? Beltran Angga is called the most cunning, most barbarous Filipino alive. Wait, Torrey. We'll get them—we'll get them. I am now laying plans for a hike into the interior."

"And so thar haint no way at all for me to git off for a while?" drawled Big Torrey, gloomily. "As far as the danger is consarned, I'll resk all o' that."

"I'm afraid I couldn't let you go," said Captain Burch. "You are too good a soldier to lose, Torrey."

The raw-boned Tennesseean took one more step toward his commanding officer. He held out both hands in a way that was pitiful, and told Captain Burch:

"Captain, back whar I come from it was considered right for a man to settle his own scores without nobody else's help. I was borned thataway. I got it in my mother's milk. I was raised up to think it was right. It's a sort o' religion with me. I don't want the comp'ny to kill off the Beltran Angga gang: I want to do it myself to settle for my brother a-bein' killed by them! If I don't git even with them thar Filipinos for a-shootin' my brother, how can I raise my head to look my folks in the eyes when I git back to the old Big Laurel Mountain?"

The Captain was silent. Big Torrey continued in a low, tense voice:

"Captain, when I go a-walkin' up the path from the gate to the door o' the old home cabin, with my heart a-bustin' all to pieces with the bad news I've got to hand over to the old folks—Captain Burch, I tell you, sir, I jest cain't face 'em and not be able to tell 'em that I settled the score! No, sir! And I'm shore a-goin' to settle the score, or go the long way myself; and, beggin' yore pardon, sir, thar haint enough men in the world to keep me back. And now good-by to you, sir, and God 'lmighty knows I shore do hate to go ag'inst yore orders."

He turned, caught up his rifle from the doorway, and disappeared in the gathering dusk. The Captain hurried after him, calling to him to come back. But Big Torrey paid no attention whatever to it, and was soon swallowed up in the bamboos that grew between the town and the range of hills.

Captain Burch turned toward his quarters a deeply troubled man—but a man who had within him a certain admiration for the private soldier the company knew as "Big Torrey."

For five long days Big Torrey's blanket was empty. The vacant space beside it made it seem all the more empty. No man of us could pass that part of the room untouched. Poor Little Torrey's canteen, his haversack, his shelter-half, his poncho, still hung on the wall above the spot where his blanket used to lie; the personality of the man himself, beckoning yet unapproachable, hovered about them. We felt that we ought to take them down and put them away; and yet—we didn't. And, oh, how we hated to think that such a man as Little Torrey had been hadn't had the opportunity of going down while fighting, instead of being shot from ambush! He could fight—we had seen him fight; and he was always at the front, with the old Rebel yell.

It was about sundown of a desperately hot day that Big Torrey came in. His rifle, cartridge-belt and bayonet were gone, as were his hat and shoes; the exposed parts of his body were scratched from contact with sawgrass and thorns; his eyes were sunken, and his cheeks were hollow. We knew that his mission had turned out disastrously. We went to meet him, a score of us; but he appeared not to see us, and we didn't speak to him. His bare feet left little spots of red across the kitchen floor. The cooky, a German with a big heart in him, passed out the supper he had saved back for himself; and the mountaineer sank to a bench and began to eat as ravenously as though he were starving—and I dare say he was.

News of Big Torrey's return soon reached Captain Burch. He came down to the company's quarters to find Big Torry lying stretched out on his blanket like one dead, his face pale except for a splotch of pink on either cheek, his black hair and beard matted and tangled.

"Torrey, are you sick?" It was not

what he had come to say. He dropped to his knees beside the mountaineer.

Torrey opened his eyes slowly. "No, I haint sick: I'm tired. Dog tired, Captain, dog tired."

"Did you meet up with the Beltran Angga outfit?"

Torrey nodded.

"Where are they?"

Torrey's face grew hard. He shook his head. And Captain Burch knew that he meant to keep the knowledge; that he wished to deal with Beltran Angga and his band himself.

"Where are they, Torrey?"

Torrey closed his eyes, and turned his head away wearily. It was beyond the power of a person with any feeling to bother him further. Captain Burch rose and went.

An hour later our mountaineer was sleeping the sleep of the fevered and delirious. A number of us watched him silently, and presently we saw him raise on an elbow, his black eyes glaring emptily, his free hand stretched out before him. We saw his lips move tremulously, and we heard him say this:

"I'll git him yit, little brother—I'll git him yit! The low-down, yaller-hearted dog! If I kill the whole sixty-two, I'll be bound to git the right one. . . . I counted 'em, little brother, afore they caught me. Thar's sixty-two. Sixty-two yaller-hearted brown devils—sixty-two—sixty-two!"

He sank back, his free hand tearing at what was left of his blue shirt, mumbling incoherently. We gathered about him, and saw that the point of a murderous kris had given his breast a shallow, curved-mark—a close call, we knew. We sent for the doctor; and when he came he found Big Torrey wild and burning with a fever brought on by privation.

It was fifteen days before Big Torrey was able to get on his feet again. During that time Captain Burch had used every means he could think of to get the mountaineer to tell where Beltran Angga's stronghold might be found, all to no avail. Our almost daily hikes in search of it had brought us nothing whatever. The wily and cunning Angga wouldn't even attempt to ambush us in the jungle. We courted ambuscade; for we too were anxious to avenge the death of Little Torrey.

When Big Torrey was able to walk out again, he seemed to have undergone some remarkable change. There was a queer light of exultation in his hollow black eyes and on his shaggy face. He was still secretive, still unapproachable; but he smiled and spoke cordially when he met us. He began to walk along the shore each day after the tide had gone out. We watched him, and saw that he was picking up shells—and we afterward learned that he was so particular about them that only those of certain sizes and shapes and tints pleased him. It was pitiful, that way he had of searching the shore for shells, day after day. And sometimes we could overhear him talking to himself; but we could never make out one word of that which he said.

Then we began to believe that his trouble had turned his mind; and soon afterward we reached the conclusion that he was hopelessly insane. If ever the hearts of a company of men bled for a comrade, ours bled for poor Big Torrey. The mountaineer noticed it. Once he started to speak to a group of us; but he only trembled at the lip and turned—toward the seashore, to look for shells of certain shapes, sizes and colors.

And then Big Torrey began to make, with infinite patience that it might be perfect, a wooden box. It was a little more than a foot long, a foot wide, and a little less than a foot deep. He sacrificed his locker to get the necessary material, and he doubled the boards to make it strong. When it was finished, he went to a Chino store and purchased a heavy brass lock for it, which he fitted on with the utmost care.

This done, he procured from the Chino store a bottle of cheap, thick glue. With this glue he put on the top, sides and ends of the box a layer of sea-shells; and the mountain poetry of the man's soul showed itself strong in their artistic arrangement as concerned shapes, sizes, and tints. That box was beautiful—it was wholly fit to be the jewel-casket of a queen! And yet I thought I could make out on the top the dim outlines of a skull and cross-

bones. Perhaps this was only a trick of my imagination; but—anyway, I would be willing to swear that there was a sinister note in the perfect beauty of the shell-adorned lid. Then Big Torrey, working silently, silently, as always, polished the brass lock to such a high degree that it might have passed among many for gold, and the box was made even more beautiful.

He went to sleep with it in his arms on the night following its completion. When we awoke the next morning, Torrey was lying there staring thoughtfully at the ceiling—but the mysterious box was nowhere in evidence.

Corporal Redfield forgot himself so far as to ask of the mountaineer, "What did you do with it?"

And Big Torrey smiled at the corporal with an element of pity in his hollow black eyes, and made no answer.

"Beg pardon," said the corporal.

"It's all right," replied Big Torrey. He sat up on his blanket, and began to comb his shaggy beard with his thin, sunburned fingers. The bugle sounded, and the company fell in for rollcall. I had been ordered the day before to keep an eye on the mountaineer,—we couldn't imprison him, insane as he seemed to us,—so I remained behind. And I heard Torrey say to himself, with his eyes turned out across the bay and seeing ten thousand miles beyond it to a cabin in the mountains: "And I say hang a man who don't love his own brother!"

He saw me then. For a moment he searched me with his gaze, the keenest gaze that I have ever endured. He continued: "Aint I right, Morris?"

"Yes, Torrey," I agreed, "you're right." And I felt that he was.

He got to his feet, gaunt, rawboned, hungry-looking. "Morris," he said to me, "if anything happens that I don't come back, I want you to tell this company for me that I shore do thank 'em for their sympathy. Tell 'em I said God 'lmighty loves men like they are."

"Are—are you going somewhere?" I regretted that I had asked it within two seconds after the words had left my tongue.

"Yes," answered Big Torrey, eyeing me curiously. "I'm a-goin' somewhar. I may go the long way—the long, long way. I don't know; but I may. But I haint afeard to go if I must."

He turned from me, and went slowly down the steps that led to the ground below. "Poor, broken mind!" I said to myself, thinking how strangely wonderful were the vagaries of broken minds, and prepared to follow him at a respectful distance.

He went down the crooked street, seeming to see nothing but the path he followed. When he had come to the jungle, he turned—and saw me, and disappeared completely. For ten minutes I searched for him, all to no avail; then I hastened to Captain Burch and told him.

The Captain evinced alarm at once. "Unless we catch him, he'll be in the hands of Beltran Angga before noon!" he exclaimed. "He knows the location of Angga's hang-out, and it's the only point of interest the jungle can possibly have for him."

Very shortly afterward more than half the company, armed and well supplied with ammunition, were trying hard to trail Big Torrey. After half an hour, we discovered footprints—the mountaineer's, without doubt—leading into the dry bed of a rainy-season creek. It was arched over with tropical foliage, and resembled more than anything else a tunnel. We followed it; it led through a gap in the hills and into the heart of Samar. The bed was sandy, though not sufficiently so to handicap our walking, and we made our way for two hours without a sound that could have been heard a hundred feet.

Then the trail of the mountaineer led out of the dry creek-bed and into the thickest jungle I have ever seen. The path he took had been worn there by carabaos. We followed it for a quarter of a mile, and came to the edge of a circular field carpeted with soft grass and studded with cocoanut palms and groups of wild banana trees. The Captain, who was of the stripe of officer who leads his men always, called out lowly:

"Down!"

We sank as one man.

"Follow on your hands and knees!" whispered Captain Burch.

We began to crawl on all fours toward three groups of banana trees, which stood so near to one another that their foliage blended.

We reached the shelter of the wild banana without mishap, and peeped through. In the center of the field stood several crude huts—the kind the Filipinos throw up in two hours; lolling on the grass before them were more than half a hundred of the most evil-visaged brown men I have ever looked upon. It was the notorious Beltran Angga band!

Hardly had we recovered from our surprise when from a group of banana trees out to our left there walked a man, going straight toward the cut-throats. He was tall and lanky, and his black hair and beard were matted and tangled; in his upraised right hand he held a white flag, and under his left arm he carried a beautiful box. By the captain's orders, we held our rifles ready to shoot down the man who offered to do harm to our mountaineer.

Beltran Angga himself rose to greet the black-bearded white man. Angga was yellowish of skin, which, with his slightly almond-shaped eyes, suggested that he was not all Visayan; his jaw was the jaw of the brute, and his nose was hideously flattened at the end. He grinned devilishly, exposing two rows of teeth stained a sickening red by constant use of the betel.

Big Torrey actually saluted! It was hard to believe. Then he deferentially tendered the beautiful, shell-covered box to Beltran Angga, and tried to say in Spanish:

"A present from the American captain."

"So," sneered the Filipino bandit, in a voice loud enough for us to hear, "*el capitan* is afraid!—he has taken to making peace offerings! *Maria!* Is it not beautiful, Gregorio?"

The latter sentence was addressed to one of his lieutenants.

"Very beautiful—wonderfully beautiful!" Gregorio cried with all the enthusiasm of the Oriental. "Suppose we see what it contains, *General mio?*"

Angga turned back to Big Torrey. "The key, señor!"

Big Torrey produced it with a somewhat overdone salute. Every native in Angga's band crowded about his chief to see what the beautiful box held within. Angga thrust the key into the lock that looked so much like pure gold. Big Torrey backed away quickly, silently, and unnoticed. Then Beltran Angga, his evil face alight with a fiendish expectancy, raised the shell-covered lid—

There came a mighty roar that seemed almost to split my head, and a jar that seemed to loosen every joint in my body. I saw a great sphere of white and powdery smoke, which was filled with dark blots that were the broken and mangled bodies of the men who had been about the beautiful box. Big Torrey alone escaped, and for all the fact that he was forty feet from the explosion, he was seriously hurt. But he did not regret it—for he had avenged the death of his brother, the youth who would never see Tennessee's everlasting hills again. Among that sixty-two, of course, was the man who had shot Little Torrey.

Big Torrey was no more insane than any other person of the company. He told us, when he was on his way to recovery, about the manner in which he had brought about the explosion:

"I fixed a pistol inside o' the box," he said, "so's to lift the lid would pull the trigger; I stole a armful o' the dynamite that's to be used in a blastin' out them thar rock down thar whar the ships lands at, and filled the box full." He went on, his face triumphant: "And now I can go a-walkin' up atween the marygolds to the old home cabin door, and tell Pap and Mother that I paid my debt. It may seem a little turrible to you fellers, I reckon; but—I loved my little brother."

The Mystery of the Vanishing Gold

Another remarkable exploit of Magnum, the scientific consultant. A dray-load of gold bullion loses weight while carried openly through the streets of London. After a series of most interesting experiments, Magnum finds the answer—and it proves a surprising one, indeed.

By MAX RITTENBERG

A TWO-HORSE lorry was moving sedately through the crowded traffic in Mark Lane. It was a long dray with low wooden sides such as might be used for transporting barrels of beer. On the high front seat were a uniformed driver and his mate.

The point of interest was that the lorry contained six large ingots of dull yellow metal.

Magnum, the scientific consultant, and Ivor Meredith, his young assistant, happened to be gazing down from the upper window of a building in Mark Lane—the ante-room to a client's office.

"It looks like gold," remarked Meredith mildly.

"It is," returned Magnum, and with a quick mental calculation he summed up the value of the ingots. "Over two hundred thousand pounds' worth."

"I should have thought it a very dangerous way to carry gold about."

"No—the safest possible. Note those two men on either side of the road. They're bank detectives. They watch the lorry from the Docks to the Bank of England. The ingots are far too heavy for anyone to steal. There's no possibility of losing them on the way."

In a block of traffic the lorry came to a standstill for some moments. Passengers on the tops of motor-'buses looked down on the yellow ingots, open to anyone's inspection, and exchanged remarks of astonishment. Like Meredith, they did not realize that this apparently crude method of transporting gold had been decided upon by the keenest brains in the Bank of England.

"Suppose," mused Meredith, "that a gang of thieves had arranged to stop that lorry. They might overpower those two detectives and get them out of the way. The two men on the front seat would know nothing of it. Then they—"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Magnum impatiently. "Imagine a man staggering through Mark Lane in broad daylight with a quarter-ton ingot of gold in his arms. Might as well try to steal a dead elephant!"

Meredith blushed and shrank into silence.

Three days later, Magnum was called to the telephone in his office at Upper Thames Street.

"Yes, yes, this is Magnum. Curse that buzzing! Exchange, d'you think I pay telephone rental in order to listen to fantasias on the buzz-saw?"

"Sorry," murmured the exchange operator mechanically, as she did about a hundred times a day, and re-plugged the connection jack.

"That's better. Now don't cut me off ten seconds later. Give me a chance to know who's speaking."

"Yes, the telephone service is disgraceful," said a quiet, dignified voice at the other end of the wire. "This is Sir Walter Symonds, of the Bank of England. Will you do me the favor to come to my office this morning for a consultation?"

"Is it urgent? I'm very busy."

"Extremely urgent, and it is a matter I cannot very well discuss over the telephone. One never knows who may be listening."

"Quite possible," agreed Magnum. "Abominable service! I'll be with you in half an hour."

Sir Walter Symonds, one of the directors of the Bank, made a marked contrast to his visitor. The banker was quiet, leisured, and dignified under all circumstances. Magnum was always hurried. After a few courteous commonplaces, Sir Walter entered on the subject of the consultation:

"Three days ago, a consignment of gold from South Africa was unloaded at the East India Docks from H. R. M. S. *Windsor Castle,* and brought to the Bank by our usual method of transport, with which you are doubtless familiar."

"I saw it. Mark Lane. Six ingots."

"Exactly. Now it may seem incredible," the banker smiled quietly as though he deprecated the sensationalism of the statement, "but on the way from the Docks about twenty thousand pounds' worth of gold disappeared."

"With your detectives watching it all the way!" exclaimed Magnum.

"Yes, and men in whom we have the utmost confidence. Six ingots left the ship; six ingots arrived at the Bank; but the difference in their weights amounted to about twenty thousand pounds sterling."

"Some mistake in weighing."

"We have of course cabled to Johannesburg to verify weights. They correspond to the weights registered by our men at the Docks, but not to the weights given on our own scales at the bullion department."

"It seems a case for the ordinary detectives," returned Magnum without much interest.

The banker drew out a letter from a drawer in his desk. "A very remarkable communication has reached me. The writer states that he has discovered a method for bringing about the disintegration of gold. He alleges that it is possible for him to cause an ingot of gold to vanish gradually. I should value your opinion on the possibility. I am not a scientist myself, and I do not know if one can attach any credence to his statement. Supposing the unlikely case that it were true, it would be very serious for the stability of the world's money-markets, would it not?"

Magnum took up the letter and examined it intently.

"H'm," said the scientist non-committally after reading it.

"What is your opinion?"

"I never deny the possibility of any new scientific discovery. The X-rays, radium, and the transmutation of elements were incredible enough when they first came to light, though they're commonplace to-day."

"And your advice?"

"If it isn't true, catch him and put him in prison. If it *is* true, put him in a lunatic asylum."

Sir Walter laughed pleasantly. "A drastic remedy! Though I am afraid the law is not sufficiently complaisant to allow us to carry out your suggestion."

"A man like that would be a danger to civilization."

"Exactly. The world's fabric of credit is based on the stability of gold. Therefore, we, as the focus of the world's money-markets, are bound to proceed cautiously. He telephoned to me yesterday offering to sell us his secret for fifty thousand pounds. Naturally he gives no address or clue by which we might find him. He asks for the sum to be paid in cash to a lawyer whom he will name, and the lawyer will then hand to us the document embodying the secret and the antidote. That removes the case out of the region of blackmail. We are asked to pay money for a definite legal consideration—that is to say, it would be

a business transaction pure and simple. Now, would you advise us, on the grounds of scientific possibility, to buy this secret for fifty thousand pounds or any other sum?"

Magnum drew himself together from his easy, rather impersonal attitude. The case was now touching him in a very personal way. If he gave wrong advice to a director of the Bank of England, it would mean a severe blow to his reputation in the City of London.

"No scientist could express an opinion on the evidence you have given me," returned Magnum with some asperity. "Ask him for proof."

"Twenty thousand pounds' worth of gold disappeared between the East India Docks and Threadneedle Street," reminded the banker gently.

"Does he claim to have managed that?"

"No—naturally he would not lay himself open to a charge of theft."

"Scarcely theft."

"Well, whatever might be the legal term for destroying the property of others."

"Ask him to destroy some of the gold in your bank vaults."

"He said that he would telephone again to me this morning. Perhaps you might care to stay in my office for the telephone call and speak to him yourself. That is, if you are willing to investigate this matter and give us your written opinion."

Magnum, with a very natural prudence, hedged. "I'll talk to him and investigate further. But I shall not definitely take up the case until I see my way clearer. No fee will be due to me until I hand you a written opinion."

The banker's eyes smiled pleasantly in recognition of this cautious answer. In Magnum's place, he would have taken the same line.

Magnum turned to the telephone on Sir Walter's desk and took up the receiver. "Hullo, Exchange! Give me the supervisor. . . . Is that the supervisor at London Wall? I'm speaking from the office of Sir Walter Symonds at the Bank of England—a private line. A call is expected this morning, and the Bank wants to know from where the call proceeds. Will you ask your order-line operators to watch for any calls and trace them back to their starting-point?. . . . Against the regulations! Why? . . . I know your operators are busy, but this matter is extremely important and I'm ready to pay for the extra trouble . . . Damn your regulations! Put me through to the Comptroller."

A Third Assistant to the Comptroller condescended to listen to Magnum's request and replied superciliously that it was out of the question. An order-line operator at Wall would be handling three or four hundred calls an hour during the rush period of the morning. It was impossible to divert the operators from their set duties.

"This request is from the Bank of England," emphasized Magnum.

"If it came from the King of England, it wouldn't affect the matter," was the flippant answer as the man rang off.

"A Government department!" commented Sir Walter.

Half an hour later the expected call came through.

"I want sixty thousand pounds for my secret," said a voice which appeared to be made deliberately husky as a matter of disguise. Otherwise it was the voice of an educated man, probably under thirty.

"You said fifty," returned Magnum.

"That was yesterday. To-day it's sixty. To-morrow the price may be seventy."

"It may not be worth seventy pence."

"Then don't buy it."

"We might be disposed to buy if we had reasonable proof."

"You've had it already."

"How?"

"I'll leave that to your recollections of the week."

"Are you prepared to destroy some of the gold in the Bank vaults?"

"Certainly not!"

"Why not?"

"Because I should have to install apparatus that would give away my secret."

"Then our gold is in no danger."

"Except in transit," taunted the voice of the unknown. "And every week there's gold moving into or out of the Bank."

"With this warning you've kindly given us, we shall take precautions."

"Take all the precautions you can think of. Engage a squad of cavalry to protect your lorries."

"Or change the route."

"Decidedly, change your route if you want to."

"Or the liners that carry the gold."

"Change the liners."

"There's something else we shall change."

"What's that?"

"That," retorted Magnum, "is our secret!"

"You'd better take my offer while the price is low," taunted the voice.

"Indicate the nature of your discovery."

"It might be a bombardment of alpha-rays from radium, suitably directed."

"Would need to be very near to the gold."

"Fishing?"

"Trying to determine what you offer us."

"You'll find that in the envelope with my lawyer."

"Who is he?"

"Before I tell you, I want to know if you are ready to pay sixty thousand in cash. Are you?"

"Will you give a week's option?"

"Certainly not!" came the decided answer. "In a week's time my secret might be worth a hundred thousand."

"Oh, go to blazes!" snapped the nettled Magnum, losing his temper.

"Right. Good-by till Monday!"

The telephone irritations of the morning, coupled with the cocksureness of this young man, roused Magnum to an inordinate desire to fight out the mystery. Thrusting aside his previous business prudence, he told Sir Walter that he would undertake to give a definite written opinion for a fee of a thousand guineas.

"That is to say, you guarantee to give us advice which will prove sound in the outcome?" asked the banker.

"Provided I'm given a free hand in the investigation—yes!" said Magnum.

His first step was to visit the gold vaults inside the citadel of the Bank of England. The head of the bullion department showed him into a steel-lined room in which ingots of gold were stored, some piled up like metal castings in a factory, others resting on low trucks. Magnum unsnapped a pocket magnifying-glass and examined minutely the consignment from the *Windsor Castle*. It was evident that the vanished gold had not been sliced or sawn away, because either of those processes would have left a type of surface easily recognizable under the magnifying-glass. On the contrary, the surface was unmistakably corroded — the marks of identification stamped on the ingots at Johannesburg were blurred, as with the legend on a coin which has been for a long time in circulation. He sniffed at it, but could detect no trace of corrosive acid.

As Magnum on leaving passed through the outer office, his eye was caught by the weighing-scale. It was a heavy machine fashioned wholly in brass, very like the scale employed for baggage at a railway station or shipping office. Indeed, viewing the heavy weight of the gold ingots, no other type of machine could be employed.

"Correct to a quarter of an ounce," mentioned the head of the bullion department, laying an affectionate hand on his protégé.

On returning to his laboratories at Upper Thames Street, Magnum passed a generous word to young Meredith.

"You are right; and I was wrong," he said.

Meredith flushed with pleasure. "In which matter?"

"Transporting gold through the streets of London. The bank lost twenty thousand pounds' worth on Monday. I've undertaken to find out how." He explained briefly the conversations of the morning, and then tossed a sovereign over to the young fellow. "Make it vanish."

"In what manner?"

"That's for your ingenuity. Try the radium alpha-rays or high-power alternating currents, or anything else you can think of."

Meredith looked blank. "I don't see how it's possible," he objected, "unless I use *aqua regia*."

"No, it wasn't managed with acid. I

could smell the nitric in *aqua regia* a month old, and there was no trace of it on the ingots."

"Or mercury."

"It would take a couple of weeks for mercury to dissolve up twenty thousand pounds' worth of gold. I want some method which will do the trick in an hour or two. Find it. Outwit that cocksure young man, who wants sixty thousand for an envelope!"

Meredith, roused by the spur of competition, took up the sovereign and set to work to plan out a campaign of scientific assault against it.

Meanwhile, Magnum entered the motor-launch moored to his back gate, and sped her at a dizzy rate down the Lower Thames to the East India Docks, restoring his equanimity by the breathless rush through the water. The *Windsor Castle,* her white paint and trim brasswork dirtied over by the grime of the East End, was patiently enduring the process of unloading. The hawsers which held her to the quay-side were rather insultingly armed with tin shields, so as to protect the wharf from any plague rats she might be carrying. On board, the fourth officer held charge.

Magnum presented his credentials from Sir Walter Symonds.

"I would like to see the strong-room," he asked.

"The detectives have done that already. You clumsy swab!" answered the fourth officer. The latter part of his remark was addressed to a stevedore.

"I want to see it also."

"The purser or his assistant has the keys, and they're both on shore leave during unloading."

"Bring them both here," ordered Magnum, impatient of obstacles, and tapped his letter of introduction emphatically.

The fourth officer whistled up a steward in a grimy fatigue jacket. "Wilks, get this gentleman the moon or anything else he asks for."

Then ensued a long period of telephoning in order to find the purser and his assistant. It was not until nightfall that they arrived at the Docks, by no means pleased at having their leave interfered with. The purser was a steady-going, middle-aged man, his subordinate a quiet, capable-looking young fellow.

"There's nothing to show," frowned the purser, unlocking the door of the strong-room and stepping over the two-foot-high sill. "We keep the gold here. The keys are always in my possession, or my assistant's. Nothing happened to the gold on the voyage. The weighing at the dockside proved that. Are you satisfied?"

"No!" snapped Magnum for want of some better rejoinder. "Why do you allow the keys out of your own possession?"

"D'you accuse me?" flared the young assistant.

Magnum turned his back on him and went sniffing round the vault in a highly impressive manner.

"Well?" demanded the purser.

"I reserve my conclusions," retorted Magnum, having formed no conclusions, and stepped out of the vault.

The purser expressed his feelings by slamming home the steel door.

Magnum sped off in the motor-launch to his home out by the Plumstead Marshes, cleaving through the night mist of the Lower Thames like some phantom rider to the sea, plumed with the white foam tossed up by the razor bow. Tugs bellowed their sirens at him; ferry-boats cursed him; a police boat sleuthing under the shadow of a deserted wharf hailed him peremptorily, then darted out in pursuit; but Magnum drove on regardless. He was intoxicated with the madness of speed, his one hobby of mental relief from the problems of his profession.

The following morning, Saturday, he was at the Bank of England with the request that Sir Walter Symonds should have the six ingots from South Africa loaded onto a lorry and taken down to the Docks by the usual route and method.

The banker looked doubtful. "Suppose that some more of the gold should disintegrate on the way?" he suggested.

"So much the better," returned Magnum briskly.

Sir Walter smiled at the rejoinder, and gave the required order. The six ingots were carefully weighed to a quarter of an ounce on the Bank scales, and

loaded onto the lorry. The detectives accompanied on foot. Magnum followed the detectives at a discreet distance, also on foot. Nothing suspicious happened.

At the Docks the ingots were piled onto the official weigh-bridge of the Port of London Authorities—a heavy iron machine rooted to the planking of the quay-side. It was, of course, not so accurate as the scale in the Bank of England, but the weight registered corresponded closely enough. Nothing had been lost on the way.

And so back to the Bank, where a third weighing tallied with the others.

Another morning wasted, and not a whit nearer a solution of the problem!

From Thursday to Monday morning with only a few hours off for sleep, the patient Meredith had been continuously assaulting that golden sovereign, as well as a specimen of pure gold obtained from a jeweler, in the hope of inducing it to shrink, evaporate or otherwise vanish. His efforts were fruitless. The gold seemed as stable as the law of gravitation.

"I'm afraid," he suggested mildly.

Magnum tugged at his strangely reddish beard, and furrowed his forehead.

"It's not the loss of a thousand-guinea fee I object to, but being beaten by that cocksure young fellow."

Meredith said nothing. His department was the purely analytical; he left all initiative to his chief.

Magnum was in the act of setting light to a pipeful of his special evil-odored mixture, when he suddenly jumped up, and with a curt, "I'm off to the Docks," bustled out.

The *Windsor Castle* was now in the process of loading for its end-of-the-week departure. Magnum paid no attention to the ship, but made straight for the official weighbridge, examining its solid impassiveness with a searching eye.

"What's below the wharf?" he asked of a Port of London harbormaster.

"The cold-storage rooms, sir," was the answer.

"Could I see over them?"

"Certainly. But I should advise you not to stay in them too long, as you would be liable to catch a chill."

He passed Magnum over to the single attendant in charge of the cold-storage. Down below the wharfside, Magnum was conducted to an icy rabbit-warren of passages where frozen mutton from Australia, game and butter were awaiting, in coverings of sacks and muslin-nettings, their removal to the markets.

"What's above here?" he asked.

"Some part of the offices or wharf—I couldn't exactly say which, sir."

"Have you a plan of the arrangement of these rooms?"

"Yes, sir. I'll fetch it."

Magnum studied the diagram intently, and made his way to one end of a passage.

"Do you happen to remember what was here last Monday morning on that top shelf?"

The attendant scratched his head to stimulate the inside brain. Magnum assisted with a half-crown.

"Sacks of game, sir," was the recollection. "They were taking them away."

"Who?"

"The firm they belonged to."

"Could you trace the firm?"

"I'll have to look up my books."

"Were you watching while the firm's men were down here?"

"No, I don't think so. I check at the outer door."

"Did you happen to notice anything peculiar about the packages they took away?"

"Now you mention it, sir, I did. One of them was so heavy that two men had to carry it. I remember saying: 'You've got a corpse there.' Of course that was only a joke."

"What were the men like?"

"One of them was just a workman of some kind, and the other was a young fellow, a sort of manager."

"Ah! Quiet, dark, capable-looking?"

"Yes, sir, that would just fit."

Magnum passed over a sovereign. "I'm going to telephone for a young man I know to come down to the Docks. I'll lead him past your office, and I want you to look carefully through the window and tell me afterwards if you recognize him. Don't mention a word of this to anyone, and there may be a second sovereign for you."

Another prolonged bout with the

fourth officer, the steward Wilks and the telephone fetched the assistant purser from his home in North London, highly indignant at this further interruption to shore leave.

"What is it now?" he demanded of Magnum.

The scientist was, for this occasion only, quite apologetic.

"I'm very sorry if I'm giving you unnecessary trouble. Perhaps this fiver will compensate you?"

The young fellow waved it away. "I'm not in the habit of taking tips."

"Now tell me: the gold was weighed on a Port of London weigh-bridge on Monday morning?"

A careless nod.

Magnum led the way towards the machine. "That one?"

"Probably."

The window of the cold-storage office was around the corner. Magnum led the way slowly past it.

"And they trucked the gold by this passage to the lorry?"

"Possibly. I wasn't here."

"Where were you?"

"That's not your concern. But if you want to know particularly, I was at home. I went off on leave early Monday morning."

"That's all I wanted to ask you."

When the young fellow was out of sight, Magnum returned briskly to the cold-storage attendant.

"You saw him. Was that the young man?"

"Yes, sir, it was," affirmed the attendant. "But last Monday he was wearing another suit of clothes and a bowler hat, not a soft felt."

"You could swear it was the same man?" pursued Magnum eagerly.

"On my Bible oath, sir!"

"Then here's a fiver for you."

Sir Walter Symonds wore an air of some concern as Magnum entered his office.

"I have had another telephone message during the day," he mentioned. "We are now asked to pay a hundred thousand pounds for the secret. I have consulted with my co-directors, and we are anxious to have your opinion as early as possible."

The scientist handed over a sheet of letter-paper. *"Pay nothing,"* was its brief message, followed by Magnum's heavy signature.

Sir Walter smiled in relief. "And your reasons?" he asked.

"The gold did not vanish on its way from the Docks to the Bank. It disappeared between Johannesburg and London—most probably, on the voyage. I suspect that for a couple of weeks the strong-room of the *Windsor Castle* was turned into a mercury bath. The vault has a high sill to the doorway, and would exactly serve that purpose. A fortnight's rocking with mercury would easily eat up twenty thousand pounds' worth of gold."

"But the weighing at the Docks corresponded roughly with the Johannesburg weight!" objected Sir Walter.

"It's an *iron* weigh-bridge."

"I do not see the application of that point."

"In the cold-storage rooms below the wharf, one or more men manipulated a powerful electro-magnet to depress the iron scale and so falsify the weighing. A very neat and audacious scheme. But the cleverest feature was the attempt to trail the Bank off the scent by the cock-and-bull story of a new method for disintegrating gold. That made you concentrate on the transport between the Docks and Threadneedle Street. Very natural. Of course, I personally was not deceived for a moment by the story."

Magnum's recording angel may have been charitable enough to overlook this.

"I knew from the first that it was a fairy-tale," pursued Magnum, "though it would not have done to let him suspect over the telephone that I saw through it."

"Who is this man?"

"The assistant purser."

"Have you had him arrested?"

"No, my duty ends with explaining to you how the scheme was planned," answered Magnum. "I have no interest in policemen's work. Frankly, I rather admire the fellow's ingenuity. If he should manage to escape arrest . . . well, I don't know that I should feel greatly disappointed."

Complete Résumé of Previous Installments

"INNOCENCE" is the name which Clay Landrum has given to his wonderfully beautiful painting of a nude young girl, for which his *fiancée* Esther has posed as model. Richardson Buchanan, a wealthy man who pretends to be a connoisseur of art in order that he may the more easily pursue the women who earn their livelihood as artists' models, offers ten thousand dollars for the painting; Landrum promptly declines the offer.

Yeoman, the art dealer, reminds Landrum that to offend Buchanan will be to ruin his career; but his influence is counterbalanced by that of Kathleen Morrison, a wealthy young heiress and philanthropist, who urges the artist to be steadfast in his refusal. Landrum takes Esther and a number of his artist friends to a Bohemian restaurant. There Buchanan finds them, and by the exercise of the sinister talents of which he is master, contrives to meet Esther and to influence the whole party to accept his invitation to a dinner at the Café de l'Opera.

The millionaire has already discovered the weak point in Landrum's armor—a craving for alcohol. So at the dinner—a feast graced by all the luxuries of which wealth could conceive—Buchanan plays upon the artist's failing.

Esther is seated beside the millionaire, and Landrum finds himself next to a fascinating woman—one of several with the names of whom Buchanan's is linked. As the dinner proceeds, Landrum's jealousy of Esther increases, even as his growing intoxication maddens him. The climax comes when the servants bring expensive presents to each of the women—and Esther's proves to be a costly diamond brooch. Landrum springs up, knocks down a waiter who interferes, snatches the brooch from Esther, and hurls it in Buchanan's face. After a struggle the artist is finally overpowered; but as they are about to force a sedative dose of morphine upon him, he wrenches free and rushes out.

In his despair and shame, Landrum drinks himself into a stupor. Afterward he is cared for by his friend, the drunken artist Nye. When Landrum has recovered somewhat, the two go to Esther's apartment. At the door they meet Buchanan—and Nye forces the millionaire to leave without seeing her. Later, Nye explains that his own wife had been one of Buchanan's victims.

And now, when Landrum has practically succeeded in shaking off the temptation of drink, comes word from a magazine editor that a certain set of illustrations for which the artist has accepted a commission must be completed in six hours. Landrum has always taken great pride in his dependability; he cannot bear to fail now; and he calls upon the whisky-devil to help him complete the almost super-human task. By the aid of the stimulant he succeeds in finishing the drawings, but the ordeal leaves him weak and exhausted. And then it is that he meets Esther driving in Buchanan's electric coupé. Landrum suspects the worst; and the one-time lovers part in anger.

Yeoman tries again to persuade Landrum to sell "Innocence" to Buchanan, and to influence the artist to take advantage of the vogue for his work which the millionaire's offer has created. Landrum declines to be persuaded; and even when Kathleen Morrison duplicates Buchanan's offer of ten thousand dollars for the picture, he refuses—for he meditates a subtle revenge upon the millionaire. Meanwhile, Esther, cast off by Landrum, seeks Buchanan in his office, and they spend a gay evening together in the all-night cafés.

"INNOCENCE"

The fifth installment of this daring novel of life in "Mad Manhattan." Landrum sells "Innocence" to a saloon-keeper. The millionaire Buchanan causes Esther to lose her position at Yvonne's. The moment of decision arrives.

By EDWIN BLISS

XII

THE SALE

UNLIKE the hard whisky drinker who has always demanded that a sordid spree should end with insensibility before his appetite becomes satiated, Landrum still possessed the faculty for concentration. Constant labor at his profession had grained him too well with the habit for one period of intoxication to wreck it.

He wandered into Madison Square park and seated himself on a bench, moodily reviewing his troubles and the best method of carrying out his scheme for revenge. Dusk was falling and the Metropolitan Tower's illumination was picking a piece from out the rapidly advancing shadows, while Fifth Avenue glistened like a white serpent, gorged to repletion. The working-folk of the locality were scurrying away to their suppers and, here and there, slouching figures wandered warily along the paths, furtive rats seeking out their benches for the night's slumber.

Landrum's painting, "Innocence," had wrecked something in his soul which nothing could replace. Esther, the model, had been lured by the millions of Richardson Buchanan and had forsaken him. Well, he had insisted upon his painter's right to do as he chose with the painting, rejecting the ten-thousand-dollar offer of the rich man. A hideous thing it had become to him, vile, unendurable, false. And, as it had brought about his shame, just so would he use it for revenge.

Even in the deep-seated melancholy that his drinking had imposed upon him, he found satisfaction enough in the thought to chuckle over the notion of selling "Innocence" to some saloon keeper, just as Nye had sold the painting of his faithless wife to one who would hang it to the common gaze.

He was sorry that Nye had done that before him. He would have wished to be original, but the liquor fumes heating his brain have nothing to do with any higher order of thought than imitativeness, save occasionally when they have to do with malice. But it was a pretty method of squaring accounts with the woman who flaunted her shame before him and finished by setting a servant upon him.

"Mister, wouldn't you slip me ten cents? I'm dying for a drink."

He stared coldly at the shabby, bedraggled applicant whose hoarse voice interrupted his reflections, and the man shrank away from him, his teeth chattering in a nervous chill which he tried to restrain by hugging his emaciated breast with his arms.

"Why don't you go to work?"

Not as a question did Landrum put it, but rather as a cold contempt. He wondered at the steely quality of his own voice, and would have taken back the words the instant they had passed his lips. That enraged him also, the self reproach at hurting a fellow.

"Come, clear out!" he growled angrily. "Don't bother me."

"Just a dime, mister. You may want one yourself some day—"

He fell back barely in time to avoid the smart swish of the artist's cane, retreating to a safe distance and studying this well groomed man through a face that had turned diabolical, the eyes mere slits, the pendulous lips in a cruel, straight line, and his nostrils working.

The man opened his lips to speak, then staggered slightly, his hand clutching at his heart, while his tongue protruded slightly from his mouth. Landrum watched him curiously, contemptuous of the fellow's misery as, panting, he sank to a bench. There came a rush of feet down the walk and a policeman bent over the sufferer, then slapped his locust sharply on the pavement.

By the time the ambulance arrived, the man was fighting viciously, tossing the two officers about as though they had been paper things, his voice rising in shrieks that brought hurried throngs from the Avenue. Somehow, Landrum took but little interest in it all. He noticed that none of the bench occupants left, only staring with unimpassioned eyes at the fellow.

"Was he bothering you, sir?" queried the first policeman when the ambulance had departed with its load.

"Begging," Clay answered indifferently.

"A shot of booze would have put it off a couple of days," commented the officer. "Poor devil, he used to be a boss contractor in my old district."

The artist rose impatiently and wandered from the park. Why was it that every drunkard seemed to cause people to recount the high lights in his past? Why was it that there always seemed so many high lights in the past? A drink would have saved the fellow, eh? Well, he was better off in Bellevue.

He tried to dismiss the incident from his mind, but somehow after each drink he took it assumed larger and larger proportions. He fell to brooding upon it, enraged with the injustice of the beggar's finding him just at a time when his mood was ugliest. Once he fell to weeping softly as he recalled the way the pitifully wasted arms had sought the breast when the chill was on the man. He caught a significant smile from the white jacketed bartender and cursed him as he paid his score, violently seeking sympathy from the frozen-faced cashier.

Broadway beckoned with its myriad lights, its warmth and color. The jostling of many arms against his own, and the cool night air, induced a fit of self-disgust within him that partially straightened him out. He wandered into a theatre, hoping with the music and fun of the musical comedy to get himself sober. But the performance which he had thoroughly enjoyed once before was dull and dry. The intermission found him upon the street, hurrying toward the corner café.

A gilded, garish place it was, be-mirrored and bedecked with suggestive paintings. In a flashy way the decorating had been done in artistic fashion, and he rather enjoyed the atmosphere of the bar, with its pyramids of highly polished glasses blown in the most delicate shapes from the thinnest of material. Then too, the white-clad bartenders formed a proper relief from the men in evening clothes they served.

Like a flash, through his sluggishly working brain came back the idea that had departed for an hour or more. "Innocence" would find a proper setting here. This was a place that the sort of men Richardson Buchanan consorted with would come. Here was evidently a man who would pay a fair price for the painting. His hand trembled as he poured himself another drink to steady his nerves before he asked for the proprietor.

"Be here in an hour," politely returned the head bartender. "Anything I can do for you, sir?"

"It's a painting I thought he might care to buy," Clay answered; then, in a huff as the man smilingly ventured that he did not think his employer cared

to do anything more in that line: "I have been offered ten thousand dollars for it within the week. I'm willing to let it go cheaper now."

There was an assurance in his manner that caught and held the other's attention. He asked no reason for the reduction in price, asked nothing more. He was wise to the foibles of the drinking man, and Clay's appearance was a bit wild. His eyes were haggard and shot with red streaks, and his shoulders were hunched forward, working in a strange rage.

At the end of the bar he waited, his foot planted firmly on the brass rail, his right arm resting upon the polished rosewood as though it had grown there, so immovable was it, while with his left hand he poured from the bottle before him, gulping the drinks down greedily and gasping slightly at the jolt with which they reached their destination. A voice sounded at his side and he turned to look into a very handsome man's face.

"I understand you wished to sell me a painting, sir," politely began the red-faced gentleman with the snowy white mustache and soldierly carriage.

"Yes—I call it 'Innocence,'" Clay answered quickly, his eyes lighting with delight at reaching such an advanced point in his mission. "I am Clay Landrum, the artist," he added, drawing himself erect, a note of arrogance in his voice.

"Pleased to meet you," smiled the proprietor of the saloon, extending his hand. "I saw the painting in Yeoman's window lately. I am very fond of paintings. In fact, I have made quite a little money from them."

The artist seized his arm harshly as a menace to his plans suggested itself to him from the words.

"But you must not sell 'Innocence.' That will be in the bill of sale—that it is not to be re-sold."

The man looked at him curiously.

"That makes a difference. I don't think you will have much difficulty disposing of the work."

"I have refused ten thousand cash within the week. I didn't like the man who wanted it." He glared at his questioner as though daring him to doubt the veracity of his apparently ludicrous statement, but the man nodded understandingly.

"I can't see myself paying half that," he said quietly. "In the first place, I don't need the painting. In the second place, I am comparatively poor and would like to make a turn on it if I got a chance."

"What will you give?" Clay poured himself a drink and gulped it down, trying to clear the clouds from his eyes, the mists from off his brain. He suspected that this man would sense his condition and try to take advantage of it.

"Five hundred spot cash and four thousand dollars credit here." It certainly took the man little time to think over his offer. Landrum envied him his nimble wit, while he laughed at the proposition. What would he do with four thousand dollars credit in such a place as this? He reached in his pocket and found he had but a few coins left there. It struck him as a tragedy that it should happen to him at such a time. More than a tragedy, it was perhaps an omen.

Five hundred dollars cash and four thousand in credit. He laughed aloud as he poured himself another drink. It cleared his eyes and he tried to draw himself up for a refusal. The effort was too great. He buried his head in his outflung arms and sobbed bitterly. The proprietor patted him kindly upon the shoulder and he babbled his distress and the revenge he sought upon his sweetheart. And, as he talked, the rage began to burn up all his grief. Again he felt the arms of the chauffeur, tossing him against the curb when he would have prevented Esther's entering the brougham of Buchanan. Again he saw the cruel, disgusted curl of her lips as she looked back at him. Once more he felt the powerful hold of the millionaire upon his shoulders, rendering him powerless to move.

"All right," he finished, in a wild rage, slamming his glass upon the bar with a force that cracked it in his hands. "It's yours for five hundred cash and four thousand credit. It must be hung here and it can't be re-sold except to me. Put that in the agreement and send

around to my studio for the painting."

The proprietor stroked his white mustache reflectively.

"Of course you can show credentials—" he began, when Clay interrupted by drawing some papers from his pocket and tossing them at the man in a rage.

Fifteen minutes later he found himself in a taxicab, babbling against the cushions, wild, distorted images leering at him, a great, black despair in his heart.

The last hold upon the old life was gone now, and he realized it with a thrilling poignancy which the whisky only intensified. Esther had passed from out his life with the sale of "Innocence." Friends would turn their backs upon him in shocked disgust at his act. And Miss Kathleen Morrison had pleaded with him, for his own sake, not to do this thing.

For a moment the thought of her cooled his fevered brain, drove away the fantasies that haunted him. He muttered her name over and over again; then another gust of passion smote him at the thought of having lost her friendship too.

And why had he done this thing? Esther was a chit of a child, brainless, pretty, insipid. It could not have been that turning her back upon him had caused such hatred to rise in his soul. He felt in his pockets, and the crinkly feel of the roll of bills, wrapped about with the copy of the contract and the credit-slip, burned his very finger tips. Whisky had done all this. Whisky had claimed him for its own and there was no mistaking the strength of that hold.

He drew the money from his pocket. He was unconscious that he even held it for the fear that shook him. He was lost—lost—lost. In the morning, on waking, it would be the Terror again—the Terror from which there was no easing save through the medium of whisky, that never ending link that would land him—

Before his eyes, in the taxi window, slowly rose a figure. It was a shabby, tattered man who shambled abjectly, and whose teeth chattered so he could scarcely enunciate his plea for money to buy whisky. He had clasped his breast with his arms to keep warm, and the Terror was upon him even as he begged. And he had shrank away and then had gone in a rage as he hurled his prophecy to Landrum that the day might come when he'd need one himself.

And the artist crouched back against the cushions, shaking with affright, trying to push the figure away from him, that face of rage with lips curling away from the teeth, and with the slits of eyes. And the man's chattering words still sounded in his ears even as the man himself drew away his hands from his face and leered cruelly at him.

Then the face became the face of Esther, and her eyes were filled with scorn as they changed into the eyes of Buchanan. And a hand clasped his wrist and, looking down, he saw it was grimy and claw-like and was the same hand that had gone to the beggar's heart when he sank upon the park bench. But the body of the man and the face had disappeared.

He tried to cry aloud for help, but his throat refused to perform its function. He struggled, writhed away, but still the hand drew him on—on—on until he entered a bar-room, adorned with paintings. And at one end of the gaudy room, conspicuous above all the other pictures, was the nude figure of "Innocence."

And then, as the claw-like, grubby hand that held him tight rose and pointed toward the picture, it changed and became draped, and the face of Kathleen Morrison looked out of the frame at him, stared with grave, sad eyes that held the griefs of the world in their depths. And, as he tried to cover his eyes, the harsh, croaking voice of the man who owned the hand sounded in wild laughter.

Landrum shrieked as he forced his eyes to travel down. And then he saw that the window of the cab had clamped upon the roll of bills clenched in his fist, probably while he threshed about, and it was that which had seemed to hold him.

In a swift revulsion of feeling he grated a bitter oath and drove his fist through the glass, hurling the money from him. The taxi driver swerved his

car to a halt and threw open the door, his face working angrily.

"That'll be about enough for you," he cried. "Pay me what the clock reads and for that window before I smash your face in."

Sanity streaked its trail through the overwrought brain of the artist. He grasped the man's arm, speaking quickly, horrified to see that in his haste he was becoming incoherent.

"It's in the road—my money—I threw it out the window when I broke the glass—don't you hear—"

The fellow laughed, though the laugh was with his lips alone. Clay, in a panic, threw off his grasp and leaped from the cab, starting down the street. Arms were about, holding him securely, while the ugly notes of the driver sounded in his ears.

"No, you don't come that on me! Pay up or I'll call a cop."

Babbling his honesty, Landrum fought. Around the corner, under a street lamp, he caught the glitter of a policeman's buttons. The sight frenzied him. In a wild rage, inspired by terror, he lashed out with his fist, catching the man a glancing blow that staggered and sent him reeling backwards. The man shouted wildly for assistance and, as the patter of the officer's feet came to Clay's ears, a great, overwhelming passion seized him, a passion that held him to the spot as though he had been glued there.

A brief struggle. Panting breaths. Arms about him. His own arms and legs failing. His teeth fastened into the flesh of a cursing man. Then blackness.

XIII

THE EASY WAY

THINGS came back very slowly, far more fraught with terror than they ever had been before. For quite a long time after the recurrence of consciousness he dared not open his eyes, lest they be forced from the sockets by the maddening streaks of flame that darted through his cranium with the brilliancy and eccentric movements of heat lightning. He groped about him, feeling the narrow, hard board upon which he was huddled. Weird sounds, bestial moans and laughter came to his ears, now and then interrupted by clangorous metallic sounds, as of some one rattling iron bars. And then he sat bolt upright, his scalp tightening so that every hair stood upright on his head, his flesh pimpling with horrified consciousness. He was in jail.

In jail! He tried to gain his feet, staggering clear across his cell and landing with a thud against the opposite wall. In jail! He was a common jailbird. No, worse than that, for he was in jail, where the most shameless drunkard would usually be allowed to go free.

He groped in his pockets, keenly alive to the fact that he had lost something of great price and had been deterred from getting it again. Not even a scrap of paper could he find. The sense of loss grew upon him in ever shortening waves, flooding his brain and lending poignancy to the throbbing there.

Would it never stop to give him peace wherein to think? He pressed his palms against his temples, trying to compress his skull and thus drive away the flashing lights that agonized him. It seemed to be without effect. When he withdrew his hands he noticed that the right was smeared a brilliant red.

The sight of blood was the one thing necessary to complete his terror. He rushed toward the narrow, barred door and, grasping the bars, clashed them with all his strength. A heavy voice sounded from without; dull footsteps echoed down a narrow corridor; a key rasped heavily in the lock and a sergeant of police stood inside the cell.

"Come to at last, huh!" he grunted, his face seaming in a black scowl. "Well, young feller, before you get through with this business you'll know what it means to assault an officer."

Before he got through? My God! Did they intend to do anything else to him? Something of his helplessness sounded in the smothered groan with which he pressed his hands to his head. The policeman removed them not ungently, pressing his calloused palm to the wound and smoothing the surrounding territory of skull. He heaved a sigh of relief.

"Missed about half an inch," he announced solemnly. "Young feller, you was born lucky. Half an inch from the temple!"

He stopped short and left the room, shortly to return with a lieutenant, who conducted the artist into the captain's private room. Landrum felt the curious glances bent upon him as he passed through the roll-room, the inquiring ones from the shirt-sleeved policemen in the dormitory. The lieutenant of police seated himself at the table and thumbed some papers, frowning as he drummed a tattoo with his blunt fingers. Suddenly he looked up, barking his question.

"What's your name?"

"Clay Landrum."

"Business?"

"I am an artist—"

"Humph! Now, young man, you may remember that you tried to beat a taxi driver out of his fare and assaulted him; that when an officer came to his assistance you grabbed his billy from him and tried to murder him. There are three charges against you here."

In one mighty engulfing wave it all came back to Clay, the fearful fancy of the claw-like hand tugging at his wrist, the rage with which he had broken the window and thrown away his money, the fight to go back after it. He leaned heavily upon the desk.

"I was intoxicated, sir. I had just sold a painting to the proprietor of El Oro saloon and dance hall for five hundred dollars cash and four thousand collateral. Some drunken impulse prompted me to break the window and throw it away. The driver stopped and I pleaded with him to let me go back for the money—it could not have been over twenty feet. He thought—"

The police officer looked up sharply, slamming his heavy fist harshly upon the desk.

"I suppose you claim, from this likely story, that the policeman got your money?"

Landrum did not answer. He stared at the carpet, wondering whether he could stand any longer. Cramps tormented his legs, knots of muscles twisted together by the tortured nerves of him. Black hazes flecked his eyes continually and every atom of his being longed to cry out against further questioning. He did not care what happened if only he could be left alone in peace for a few moments.

"Likely yarn of throwing away forty-five hundred dollars," relentlessly sneered the officer. "If I didn't think you just a plain liar I'd send you to Bellevue for examination—"

Bellevue! The artist recoiled at mention of the place, the hospital to which the tramp in the park had been taken. He covered his face with his hands, unable to stand any more torment.

"Please—please—" he pleaded, his fingers twitching violently even as he leaned upon the desk, "don't ask me anything else now. I can't stand it just now. If you say it isn't true about the money—all right. Just let me go and forget everything."

The lieutenant drummed more harshly upon the desk; then quite suddenly his face cleared.

"Very well," he snapped. "It isn't in our business to arrest men who obviously have visible means of support and are out on a spree. But let me tell you something, Mr. Landrum: you're the kind I know mighty well—the sort of man who can't take a drink. It sets you crazy, makes you as dangerous as any other violent lunatic on the street. Now I suppose you'll go out and tank up trying to get over this one."

Clay started to shake his head, but the officer laughed and threw open the door.

"On your way now," he said sharply, "and don't get the idea in your head that it's easy getting out. Next time—" Again he laughed contemptuously. "Oh, yes, there'll be a next time. There always is with your sort."

Clay wandered to the street. Every step was fraught with the most exquisite torture. Hungrily, he eyed the cabs and taxies on almost every corner. Once a bottle-nosed cabby followed him, pleading with him to step inside. Clay pressed his lips tightly together, enraged at the fellow's insistence. He had all the experience he desired with cabs and no capital.

The stagnant odor of beer assailed his nostrils at every turn, reminding him

of the relief he desired. His throat was constricted, sore even to the touch of his tongue, cracked and scarred. And the desire for whisky grew so strong that he had to force himself along his route to the studio and Nye. Nye would understand and help him out. But what if Nye should not be in?

He had the feeling, the premonition that Nye would be out. By the time he had gone two blocks he knew there was no possible chance for his fellow artist to be at home. And he could not go to any of the others, his old friends in the building. He had alienated all their affection and respect. What could he do? Where could he go?

He swung past the wicker doors of a corner saloon, desperate for the drink he felt certain there would be no getting at his studio. It was a vile smelling place, the broken tile floor covered with a thick layer of sawdust, the mirror behind the bar dirty with the accumulated dust of months. Overalled men smoking pipes lounged at the bar while they were attended by a heavy-jowled, black-mustached fellow whose nose claimed such close kinship with his forehead that the brow gave the impression of receding to the peaked top of his cropped head. He leaned across the bar as the artist tried to speak, his voice coming in a croak at the third attempt.

"Could I charge a drink of whisky, sir," he begged, his manner abjectly pleading. "I've met with an accident and have lost my money. I'll pay this afternoon—"

"Beat it!" The bartender's jaw had suddenly grown out about an inch from its natural position. "On your way!" he snarled, as Clay started to renew his plea. "Why don't you go to work, you bum, instead of begging from strangers?"

As Landrum retreated toward the door before the fellow's dash around the corner of his bar, he caught a swift glance at himself in the mirror, his blood-smeared, dirt-scarred face, his swollen lips, the eyes of him almost closed, his clothing shabby and torn and filthy. He stopped to stare in dismay.

The bartender caught him by his collar, rushing him toward the doors, using his body as a lever to cast them open, then flinging his burden clear to the gutter. Clay lay where he had fallen, lay there until a working-man helped him to his feet. He mumbled his gratitude but his assistant muttered something under his breath and passed on, wiping his hands as he did so.

So this was the reward of the whisky dealer to the one who gave him his livelihood! The artist swayed as he wearily plodded on his way, his soul burning with the outrage upon his person. So they threw him into the street when he would have a drink charged! He clenched his fists, surprised at the pain of the effort. He stared at his fingers, trying to wriggle them in the old plastic fashion. They were too puffed and swollen with uremia for working.

Again the panic threatened to overwhelm him. He fought it back, burned it up in a fresh rage. It was not a drunken rage now but the cold, unreasoning anger that came from his sufferings. Who had brought about all this but Richardson Buchanan? Well, he would regain full possession of his faculties and punish his enemy.

If only he were the man he had been a few days ago when he called at the millionaire's residence, intent upon selling "Innocence." Then he had felt perfect poise, ease, superiority; and now he could feel nothing save pain and an overwhelming self nausea.

He staggered up the steps of the studio building, enraged at old Jacques for averting his head to avoid recognition. Up the never ending stairs he dragged himself, holding to the banisters at every landing, fighting for breath, drawing his left side high to ease the fearful pain at his heart. He fairly hurled himself against Nye's door, waiting for it to open.

"Who's there?" growled the red-headed artist.

Clay felt the blood coursing briskly through his veins at sound of that voice.

"Landrum," he answered.

He swayed into the room, catching himself barely in time to avoid landing upon the floor. Nye led him to a chair and helped him slump into it, his head swaying unsteadily.

For a few moments the two men faced each other; then Landrum licked his cracked and swollen lips. Nye bent forward thoughtfully, regarding his new-found friend with a heavy frown that creased the flesh between his eyes into a V so deep it seemed a sewed-up gash. Quite abruptly he rose and stepped briskly into the adjoining bathroom, where he briskly moved about a few minutes before returning with a glittering hypodermic of nickel between his fingers.

"Listen, Landrum, and listen closely," he said quietly, after he had reseated himself. "Is the story in this morning's papers true, about your selling 'Innocence' to Buckmaster, of El Oro dance hall?"

Landrum nodded weakly, then sprang to his feet, pacing the floor like a wild animal.

"For God's sake, man, get me a drink," he cried harshly.

Still Nye shook his head.

"It don't do any good," he said quietly. "I'll fix you up better than that. But I want just a minute first. I know all about what inspired your selling the picture there. I know all about this grand spree you've been on. Can you get the painting back from Buckmaster?"

"Yes, but get me a drink and then—"

"Do you want to buy it back?"

"No." His fists rose and banged viciously upon the arm of the chair.

"Then you'll stay drunk just so long as it's there. You put it there for revenge and you'll get it through torturing yourself. Now, if you want, I'll give you a shot of cocaine to get you over this attack easily. Whisky will never do it. The reason so many doctors are drug fiends, dopes, is because they know dope fixes everything easily. They always think they can stop. It's hard so long as you keep something with you that you want to stop easily."

Landrum drew back in natural revulsion from the glittering instrument.

"Whisky route is a straight one to hell, old man," said Nye firmly, rising from his chair. "Dope makes the path on earth that leads to hell a little easier. Do you want it?"

He took the wrist of his friend and gently pressed together a little ridge of flesh, massaging it softly between his fingers. Clay sat in his chair, waiting in horror for the prick of the needle which did not come. Nye suddenly left the room, returning in a moment, a grim smile upon his face.

Clay stared at the long ridge upon his wrist, the unmistakable ridge made by the watery injection. Horror at his cowardice in surrendering to such alleviation of misery swept him up and started to carry him away. And then he laughed aloud, for complete surcease from pain had come over him, exhilarating, divine. It was as though a cooling ointment had been applied to a burn.

Nye did not join in his laughter. He stared into vacancy, his long legs stretched out before him, his craggy, primitive face wearing a curiously melancholy expression.

XIV

MISTAKEN EFFORTS

THE drug did the work effectually. Barring a slight coma on the following day, Landrum felt very well. The second day he longed for a drink and the third day was what farmers used to call a "barn burner." The heat of desire fairly burned him up, tortured his palate till he thought he should cry aloud for the pain of it. Nye administered another dose of the cocaine solution and Landrum was more than astraddle the crisis.

At the end of the week, without any drink, he felt himself fit and able to be about. But somehow he had changed. Something inside him had smashed, gone to pot. Friends he met and had no pleasure in the meeting. Often he mocked himself for the hypocrisy which made him smile upon them. His work meant nothing to him save the money it would bring in. He did not even look at the oils, but immersed himself in a long series of pastel covers which he knew could easily be disposed of.

The one thing that delighted him was the consciousness of regained complete physical control. He enjoyed walking the Avenue and looking down at the slit that marked the asphalt, walking it

buoyantly, exulting in the difference in now and the time he recalled having staggered along that same stretch of pavement.

It was on the eighth day that a rap sounded on the studio door and he opened it to find Yeoman outside, tugging in embarrassment at his needle-pointed mustaches. Landrum smiled grimly. He knew that only some great chance for gain could bring the man to him, knew and exulted in his power. The dealer refused the proffered chair, explaining that he had but a moment to spare but, chancing to be in the neighborhood had dropped in.

"As a matter of fact, Landrum," he added confidentially, "I find that there is a demand for your stuff. Now we are business men, and where there's money, there's where we want to go—what?"

Clay nodded interestedly. He did want money, commissions.

"There are three orders waiting for portraits, and the people are of a caliber to pay what you ask. Remember that you're a fifteen-thousand-dollar man. One is of an old lady—Mrs. Leidy; there is one of a child, and the third will be tough—old James Cooper and his two grandchildren in a group."

He took an added twirl at his mustaches as he turned toward the door, then smiled paternally. "Forget what I said in a rage, old man," he pleaded. "I'm not the sort to say that because of a little money, and you know it well enough for me to say that I'm sorry. Let us get together and clean up these orders and the others will roll in."

Landrum stared out the window for a moment, conscious of the dealer's eyes still fastened upon him. Old Mrs. Leidy — James Cooper — the names spelt wealth and discrimination in New York. It meant that should he satisfy—as he could not help doing—thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars would be his for the acceptance. The thought seemed to melt something inside him, something that had frozen and remained there to torment him for a long time. How long he could not recall—how many centuries or minutes or years or days.

He was conscious that Yeoman had not left, that the man's beady eyes were still fastened upon him, studying him. He turned.

"Thanks," he murmured a bit brokenly. "That's good of you, Yeoman. It bucks me all up to know about them. Oh, I'm all right now, straight as a string," he added, laughing at the hesitant expression on the man's face.

"Good, good—" Yeoman still waited, clearing his throat with a nervous cough. "Of course, Landrum," he said easily, "we'll have to get 'Innocence' out of Buckmaster's saloon before we start in painting family portraits. I'll fix that up with Buckmaster easily enough—dropped in on him, by the way, this morning, but he said you had a clause in the bill of sale that it was not to be removed except by your permission. If you'd just 'phone him it would fix things all right."

Clay stared at Yeoman. For the first time he felt really glad he had not taken a drink. He felt the anger surge within him and knew that he would act in a cold, icy rage that could not be mistaken for drunken frenzy. He was really glad of this opportunity to place his act on record while sober.

"You mean, Yeoman," he queried in an indifferent tone that took the dealer entirely off guard, "that Buchanan has consented to allow me to paint if I will remove 'Innocence?'"

The dealer had started to nod assent but changed it instantly to one of hurt indignation. Clay cut him short with a gesture.

"I don't blame you, Yeoman. I understand you. I owe you a debt, Yeoman, for letting me know that the beast is hurt, is yelping. Well, that's what I put it there for, to place men on their guard against mistaken conceptions, to have them know things like Buchanan and 'Innocence.' I'm much obliged to you for calling but—I'd rather not paint the portraits. Good day."

Before the dealer could quite understand how it had happened he found himself outside the door, stumbling in a blind rage down the stairs, muttering and cursing to himself. Landrum had returned to the window and was smiling, smiling and chuckling. He had never had such pleasure out of anything. He could imagine the intriguing

efforts the multi-millionaire had made to have the painting removed from El Oro, could fancy the man's rage. Why, to gain Yeoman's coöperation he must have offered a tremendous fee; to induce old Cooper to sit to this notorious artist must have required the putting on of tremendous pressure. And it had all grown out of the hanging of "Innocence."

Innocence in El Oro! He could see Esther's sharp, milk-white little teeth fretting at her under lip. What a pretty, false thing she was. And how she must have twined herself about the gross Buchanan. He laughed again.

Two exotic growths, two parasites, two beings demanding sustenance only from the life blood of each other! Which would wear the other down? What could the end be of the orchid wedded to the frog?

He did not notice in his gleeful mental state that Slegel and Hardenbrook had entered the studio and were looking at him curiously, a bit surprised to find him in such good humor and yet half suspecting the cause to be whisky. Clay greeted them with uproarious welcome. Not that he cared for their company, but he was so delighted with his thoughts that the sheer effervescence of them made him long for some outlet. He shoved his pastels in the hands of the men, pointing out merits and defects of drawing, talking brilliantly, laughing over little tricks of foreshortening he had worked in, little short cuts he had made, delighting in the chicanery of a master magician. The men looked at him in surprise, disapprovingly. He had always been so conscientious in his work, so scornful of subterfuge, that they could not understand this change. While they were willing to do such things themselves, while they had chosen the easier way to a living, they had always rejoiced in Clay's stout opposition to trickery, his immutable disdain for that which was not of his best.

"As a matter of fact, Clay," Hardenbrook said, putting aside the pastel and lighting a cigarette, "Slegel and I came from the bunch. We've been talking you over— Wait a minute, old man," he added quickly as Landrum's face clouded. "'Tis because we love you, boy, that we got up the nerve to do it. We've been tickled to death seeing you take such a brace to yourself, Clay, and we just want you to know, old boy, that we've got the same feeling for you we always had. We all get drunk now and then, and some of us get glad and some of us get mad and some of us get worse—but, Clay, you get worse than that. Take a tip from me, Clay, and cut the booze entirely."

"What's all this about," Landrum demanded coldly.

Hardenbrook looked in bewilderment at Slegel and Slegel turned away, flushed at finding himself completely unable to fill in the gap.

"Why, just to let you know that none of us have any hard feelings. Emmy was hurt—that's all. Seabrooke was sore at first, but he's over it now and even old Jacques says you can kick him down the stairs a hundred times if you don't look like you're going to follow him up and get your teeth in him."

"A happy family again, eh?" Clay's voice was soft, his tones smooth, but there was something to the set of his mouth, the hard twinkle in his eyes which brought to flame the smoldering fire that always was latent in the composition of the worthless Slegel.

"Well, you needn't be so damned supercilious about it," he snapped. "I'm no saint and none of us pretend to be, but it went pretty hard for you to throw the bunch of us down the way you did. We're a pretty decent sort of crowd, with fair reputations, and the building has been a sort of home to us all. But this 'Innocence' business was a little more than I could stomach."

"What about it, Slegel? I have a perfect right to sell the product of my brush to whomever I choose. If I recall rightly, you have done some painting for the Pusch brewery people."

"That aint the question. I'm a never-was. I've got a right to be proud of your arrival—you can't take that from me. I always have been proud of you, always knew you'd do something big, do the things I wanted to do and didn't have the talent nor the nerve to do: I knew that."

He paused, out of breath from the vehemence of his tirade, that should have fallen so sweetly upon his friend's ears, but Clay's lips were curled in a sneer that inflamed Slegel the more.

"Esther—I like Esther. She was a good, sweet kid. I object to any man's doing what you did. You advertised the model by your drunk and then you hang her in that dive of Buckmaster's. It brought down stories on the whole lot of us. It wasn't you that did it, I know. It was the damned booze. But just the same it was done and people don't understand such differences." His voice lowered, his tones changed to pleading. "Now, old fellow, come along with us and fix the thing up. We tried to buy Buckmaster out and he was more than willing to have the picture removed—even he was ashamed of the whole affair when he understood. But he said—"

"It wasn't the booze, Slegel," Landrum quietly cut in. "Yeoman was here just now with three orders for big work if I would have 'Innocence' removed. I said no. When you men came in I was laughing because I knew that the lesson I wanted to teach by that sale was not wasted. I did it drunk, but that drunk wasn't anything connected with my brain. I refused all orders from Yeoman that have any bearing upon 'Innocence.' 'Innocence' is where it belongs. 'Innocence' is just as much innocence as El Oro is Heaven."

He stopped a moment, pacing up and down the floor, rumpling his shaggy hair with his nervous, powerful fingers. Finally he halted and faced them again, throwing out his arms in a wide, all-inclusive gesture.

"You know I've always been faithful to my art—spelt it with a big *A*. And now you come to me and tell me you're proud of me and want to help me. Well, do you want to help me by showing the falseness of my conception to everyone who knows—in some big picture gallery? That's not the way to do it, men. I was all wrong in my conception of 'Innocence' and I was ashamed of it for that reason. It is where it belongs. It's unhealthy and it's unclean, and it stays in an unhealthy, unclean place. That's all I've got to say about it."

"And all I've got to say to you is—" Slegel halted suddenly, biting his lip viciously. Hardenbrook took him by the arm and forced him to the door. The pair looked back; and Landrum, with folded arms, stood in the center of the floor, smiling at them, smiling cynically, bitterly.

The door slammed viciously shut and the artist laughed aloud, laughed until he was obliged to throw himself upon the couch to control his mirth, laughed until Nye hammered upon the ceiling and bellowed for a little less racket.

XV

THE PROMISE OF INNOCENCE

ESTHER wakened, strangely weary. Unconsciously her eyes sought the clock and rested on the place where it had always been, puzzled at not finding it there. Then she recalled having tossed it out the window when she returned home from making the rounds of Broadway's lobster palaces with Richardson Buchanan. She laughed at the nervous whim that had caused her to do this.

She swung over to the side of the bed, looking at herself thoughtfully in the mirror, curling her feet luxuriously together. The lines of her exquisitely immature, girlish figure were enhanced by the thinness of the nightgown covering it. She laughed aloud at the revelation of her own character which had come to her so abruptly, so startlingly.

She was happy. She wanted Buchanan. Before, she had wanted him for what he could do for her in the way of comfort. Now, her fingers longed for the feel of the long, steel-springed muscles under that heavy coat of fat. Her finger-tips thrilled with an inexplicable desire to find themselves at the back of the great neck, with its folds of flesh, to press tightly down upon those folds and feel the gush of the too heavily charged blood in his body. She looked at herself quite calmly in the glass, not blushing for her desire. She wondered, on the other hand, if she could ever endure the man's touching her flesh with his own hands. She thought not; yet—

Well, all that was for the future. She dressed hurriedly, taking pains to make herself as pretty as possible. She must be off to Yvonne's immediately, for McMurty, who was the bland Yvonne to the patrons of the millinery shop, was brutally harsh to employees. She must never allow Buchanan to suspect that she had any thought of escaping her work.

She did not envy the early morning passengers in their limousines, looked with a comradely smile at the ones in the hotel and restaurant windows. She would be with them before long, would be a part of all this, quite as bored with the effort to keep alive as they were.

"I understand—Mr. Buchanan sent word that you were ill," McMurty answered her attempt at explanation curtly.

He moved to the stock-room below and she idled about the rooms, waiting the eleven o'clock hour when the first rush always began. It could hardly be called a "rush" in the ordinary sense of the word, but, in a place where every woman who bought at all was apt to purchase gown after gown before leaving, the models had their work cut out for them.

Immersed in her own thoughts, Esther paid little heed to the gossip. It was always the same, tiresome after a bit: "How tight Mr. So-And-So was with little Nancy, and the child had to buy clothes on his account and sell 'em right away to get any cash at all, my dear!" Mrs. Belle had suddenly switched her charge account over to P's entry page and they always knew she wouldn't stick to that miserable little shrimp of a C for long! Mrs. A. was going to make a clothes-line campaign on Chelsea this summer and find out whether Atlantic City was her gait or not, etc., etc. All the old, old chatter she knew so well.

Tired of the work, joyously vagabonding in her own dream-field, she was suddenly aware of McMurty's listening to the angry protests of a very beautiful woman. There was something about the fine, slender lines of the woman's back which Esther seemed to recall, something that made her vaguely uneasy. She caught the hesitating look in Mack's eyes as they wandered toward her. Then she knew that she was under discussion, recalled the woman for Mrs. Nye, who was Buchanan's favorite, the woman who had sat beside Clay at the supper party at the Café de l'Opera. As the woman finished her conversation and swept haughtily from the shop, Esther looked brazenly at her, smiling unconsciously at the hard expression in the eyes that were too brilliant, at the lines suggested under the fair skin, lines that spoke eloquently of arduous massage.

She turned to look at herself in the glass, smiling at the alluring picture thrown back at her. Mrs. Nye was the favorite but her day had passed. Esther listened indifferently to McMurty when he leaned across to her, and with a curious mixture in his tones of deference and indignation repeated the complaint of the patron.

"See here, Esther, Buchanan's chasing round with you and that's none of my affair. I don't want to make you sore, dear, but you can't play both ends against the middle—it aint on the level with me. If you're going to work here, then don't make my customers jealous. If you're going to chase with Buchanan, clean up the best you know how, take my blessing and give me your trade."

"You mean I get my envelope?" Her voice was cold.

"That's a rough way of putting it, but—" He turned swiftly to a customer, bowing so low that it seemed inevitable the buttons on his tight fitting morning coat would pop. *"Bon jour, Ma'm'selle. Comment c'—"* As he stepped servilely aside, snapping his fingers in an ecstasy of briskness toward the clerks that they serve this customer, Esther caught a hard, meaning wink from his right eye.

And Esther understood. She was discharged from Yvonne's—and Buchanan had inspired her dismissal.

THE next installment of "Innocence" will appear in the March BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale at all news-stands, February 1st.

The Wings of Peril

The romance of "Dare-devil Jim" Blanchard, the aëronaut who suffered an all-but-fatal fall and then, for the sake of a woman, risked another flight.

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

THE Red Fox Inn at Riverdale is perched far up on the side of a high hill. In front of it the slope dips sharply to a little valley, in the center of which Red Fox River turns and twists and gurgles and otherwise makes its presence known by flashes of silver against the somber green of the hemlocks on its either bank. Beyond the little valley the hills rise raggedly, tier upon tier of them, until the more distant blue peaks take to themselves the name and dignity of mountains—the beginning of the range which has made the country roundabout famous.

The Red Fox Inn is low and old and rambling in structure. Its roof is of warm red tile; a little flagged walk leads up to its wide, old-fashioned door. Within, the fires on the broad hearths flicker on much golden oak wainscoting, mellow with age, and the ceilings are split here and there with great oak rafters, hand-hewn and substantial.

William Smith—at least that was the name under which he had registered when he came to the Red Fox Inn some three weeks since—had remembered this place just as he was leaving the hospital. In one of those queer freaks of a sick man's mind he remembered dining at the Inn once, and how the tiled roof and the little red-flagged walk and the wainscoting and the broad fireplaces had appealed to him. It struck him at the moment as an ideal place in which to find the quiet he so eminently needed, to rest and loaf and let his frayed nerves straighten out, if they ever would.

Three weeks at the Red Fox had done wonders for him. The crisp air had put new life into his veins; his rambles through the still woods and fields were driving from his mind the memory of those awful two months at the hospital. His face was still pinched and sallow, and his clothes hung on his frame like so many meal-bags. Still he felt he was coming on beautifully. He was even beginning to wake up o' mornings with some zest in life, without that frightful sense of oppression, which had haunted him for weeks. Nor were his nights now shattered by those ghastly dreams which brought him stark awake, whimpering in fright and clutching at the bed-clothes while a cold sweat broke out all over his body.

William Smith's eyes were young. They were pleasant brown eyes, impressing one with their squareness, their frankness, their eminent honesty. But despite the eyes and the smoothness of the skin, William Smith's face impressed you somehow as that of an old man—a

man old beyond his years. There was a tired, almost pettish droop at the corners of the mouth, and the lines about it were far too deep and prominent. Also the thick brown hair was shot through here and there with tinges of gray. This, with the curious hobbling walk and the palsied trembling of the thin, well-shaped hands gave one that impression of age that the eyes and the smooth cheeks belied.

He was a very quiet and very uncommunicative man. He had been ill; he was trying to get back his strength; that was why he had come here. That and that alone was all the manager of the Red Fox Inn was able to learn about him. Daytimes he kept out of doors, poking through the woods, or shuffling along the hilly ridges. His one passion seemed to be wild flowers. He was forever asking for vases to hold the wild asters or the purple gentians he found on his solitary walks.

It being none of the manager's business, he did not speculate overmuch as to why William Smith jumped and turned ghastly green when anyone spoke to him suddenly, or a door slammed or a dish was dropped in the dining-room. But he did notice, not without a certain inward satisfaction, that a touch of color was slowly coming back into the man's sallow cheeks and that his hands shook less as the weeks went by.

And if the manager noticed this, you may be sure William Smith himself observed it with rather more satisfaction. There was something in those mild brown eyes of William Smith's that told you he was not the sort of a man fitted for this sort of an idle life; there were certain moments when you might have detected in them sundry impatient flashes bespeaking a high courage and an indomitable will, and these were followed by a dogged look of determination which would have hinted to you that William Smith was playing a difficult game, playing it alone and with a superb courage.

Indeed, every night when he went to his room, he stood before the mirror, looking fixedly at his own reflection therein, while he repeated between set lips: "You will forget it. You *shall* forget it. That is your salvation." And, what is more, he was beginning to find this formula was not repeated wholly in vain.

He had known when he came out of the hospital what was before him; he had not in any way underestimated the fight he had on his hands. And already he was gaining! He had not looked nor hoped for any marked improvement so soon as this.

And then one morning all the ground he had gained was lost in a moment. He was the cowering, quivering, nerveless thing that had come out of the hospital. The old stringent fear was gripping his throat; the old nameless dread was taking the stiffening from his spine and his knees.

It was merely a flaring poster, plastered on the side of a deserted barn some three hunded yards down the road from the inn. Smith, walking thither that morning, had glanced at it before he realized what it was.

Lithographed in lurid colors was the likeness of a smiling young woman in a Bleriot monoplane. Beneath it in large letters was the announcement:

ELSIE FRAYNER
YOUNGEST LICENSED WOMAN AVIATOR
IN THE WORLD
WILL POSITIVELY FLY
EVERY DAY
at the
TRI-COUNTY FAIR
ROSSVILLE GROUNDS
Sept. 24-29 inclusive

He turned away shaking like a leaf. He leaned heavily on his cane as he shuffled back towards the inn. His face had gone the ghastly green that it took on when some sudden near-by sound startled him. And, although the day was very cool for the season, with something more than a hint of frost in the air, the perspiration stood out on his temples and streamed into his staring eyes.

At the inn he hobbled up to his room. His face, when he beheld it in the mirror, startled him. He tried to repeat the formula, but his tongue seemed to have swollen to twice its size. His knees shook so that the toilet articles on the dresser rattled loudly.

He clutched the sides of the mirror

and stared fixedly at that twisted face reflected in it.

"Here, get a grip on yourself! Get a grip on yourself!" he panted. Over and over he repeated it until he had forced some outward semblance of calm upon himself; but there was a frightened, haunted look in his eyes, which neither gabbled formula nor all the strength of his will could down. At last he sat down by his window, looking out across the little valley at the silver flashes of the river, the clear blue hills beyond it and the varying greens of the trees on the wooded slopes. Now and again he was seized with a paroxysm of shivering and his eyes half closed. But always they ended with a sudden almost painful squaring of the drooping shoulders and a hoarsely muttered: "Get a grip on yourself! Pull yourself together!"

That night for the first time in weeks he came stark awake, sitting up in bed and clutching the bed-clothes desperately. He was falling, falling—and so real was it all that the sensation persisted several seconds after he was fully awake. He was making little whimpering noises like a frightened child; his teeth were chattering wildly.

He got out of the bed; and because he dared not sleep, lest with loss of consciousness that nightmare should come again, he wrapped himself in a blanket and sat down by the window, watching the myriad flashing stars and the pale silhouettes of the trees against the sky.

He would have to go away after all. He had gained nothing, really, save a few false hopes. He couldn't stay on here—not now. He'd go on the first train that would get him away. Then he remembered a field of gentians he had seen two days since; he'd been on his way to it when he ran into that disquieting poster. He had a sudden swift, wholly unaccountable intuition that the blue of those gentians would make him feel better.

It was broad daylight now. The sun was peeping over the hills. He dressed himself and shuffled downstairs. He took a roundabout course through the fields—one that would spare him another sight of that poster. The long rowen of the fields soaked his feet, but he did not care. He plodded on, gained the road well below that deserted barn and made for the little depression where the gentians grew.

It was hidden from view by a bend in the road. As he neared it he caught the tap of a hammer on metal. Rounding the bend he saw a small road-car standing by the stone wall. A flushed young woman was tinkering away at the engine beneath the opened hood.

That she too had found that gentian field was evident, for the car was filled with them, their deep blue seeming to send back the reflection of the morning sky.

William Smith halted his hobbling walk; he half-turned as if about to retrace his steps. Then the girl looked up from her work. She was a wonderful, radiant young creature. Wisps of loosened hair, like golden filaments, brushed her flushed face. She was very young, not more than nineteen, Smith decided. She looked ruefully at the open hood.

"I can't seem to fix it," she said simply, and she smiled—a perplexed little grimace.

Smith tried to lift his bent shoulders. Off came his hat. He stepped forward.

"I've had a little experience with engines," said he. "Suppose I try."

She nodded gratefully; he stepped to the stalled car. In three minutes the engine was whirring.

"Oh, thank you. It's ever so good of you," she said. "Now, for what you've done for me—you were going this way—can't I give you a lift in the car?"

She was flushing beautifully, maybe because he was looking so steadily at her—in fact, rather more fixedly than he realized.

"Thank you, no. I'm going no farther—just here to get some of the gentians," said he.

She said: "Oh, then they're yours. Perhaps I've taken more than my share."

"Not at all. There are quite enough for two of us, at least."

"I saw them yesterday when I was motoring along this road," said she. "So I came out early for them this morning. They keep much better if you pick them early in the day. Aren't they wonderful?"

She had climbed into the car. She gathered up an armful of them. She was very alluring as she stood there with the gentians in her arms.

"They speak to me of peace," he said with such feeling that she looked at him quickly.

"Do they?" she asked. "That's what they seem to mean to me. Peace—but I didn't know it until you mentioned it."

She threw off the brake.

"I am Elsie Frayner," she said simply. "I'd be glad if you'd come to see me at the fair grounds at Rossville. I'm there every day at one and I seldom fly before half-past two or three. I'd like to show you my machine, if you care about such things, and I'd like you to see me fly. Come, wont you?"

The car whisked off down the road. Its roar drowned out Smith's protesting cry as he staggered back.

There was a bitter fight in that room at the Red Fox Inn that morning. William Smith, his gentians forgotten, had hobbled back there. Up and down, up and down he paced shufflingly, now quivering all over, now with flashing eyes and tight-set lips.

But at half-past one that afternoon he entered the fair-grounds at Rossville. On the far side of the race-track he saw the hangars. Panic seized him. For a moment he thought he would retreat despite all his resolutions. At last he hobbled across. Elsie Frayner was superintending two mechanicians who were overhauling a monoplane.

She ran forward as Smith hobbled across the turf.

"So you've come," she cried. "I want to introduce you to my mother, who always travels with me, and also to my manager."

Dimly William Smith realized that an oldish woman had come up, that he had been presented to her and was shaking her hand; after which a keen-faced man was introduced and greeted him.

Then they withdrew. He and the girl and the two mechanicians were alone. One of the mechanicians was looking at him closely. Smith managed to draw the girl out of ear-shot.

"I've come to-day at great cost," he said hoarsely, "to ask a favor of you. Don't fly!" he blurted out.

"Don't what?" she repeated, amazed at his words and his strange, distraught bearing.

"Don't fly," he re-iterated. "You're so young, and—you wont mind my saying it—so beautiful. Don't—neither to-day nor any other time."

Her wonderful blue eyes—eyes like the gentian color, widened.

"Why?" she said simply.

"The danger,"—he was gasping the words now—"the—the chance of a fall —the—"

Her lips curled scornfully.

"Oh goodness!" she said under her breath with a quick shrug of her shoulders. She had evidenly heard such croakings before.

"Don't!" he persisted. "Don't do it!"

She looked him over coldly.

"I thought this morning I should like you," she said. "I'm afraid I shall have to change my mind. Why, what do you know about flying? It takes nerve, I'll admit, but—"

He clutched her arm in his eagerness. "Listen to me," he began.

But she stepped away from him, a little frightened by the look in his eyes.

"Oh, don't say any more about it. I've heard all that time and time again from people who know nothing about it," she said curtly.

William Smith limped away. There was another stressful night at the inn. The next afternoon he was at the fair-grounds, again re-iterating his plea, but to deaf ears. Elsie Frayner, in high spirits that day, bantered him unmercifully. The third day he sought the grounds. It was an overcast, gusty afternoon. The mechanicians were tuning up a Bleriot monoplane as he crossed the turf to the hangars. The girl was not in sight. He found her by the little dressing tent.

"You're not going up this afternoon, anyway," he declared.

"Why?" she asked.

"This air is full of pockets. It's not safe."

"What have you been reading about flying to give you such a faint heart?" she mocked. "Some sensational account of an accident?"

He said nothing. His face was drawn and twisted.

She came nearer to him. Her face was suddenly serious.

"You were so nice about the engine that morning—and—and you have such a really good face and such brave eyes," she said. "Don't—don't make me hate you by croaking like an old woman. I like nerve—I adore it; I'd die for it. It's the only thing in the world worth while. I want to like you, but you wont let me—you and your silly fears. Please, please—"

She stopped suddenly. She turned on her heel.

"I'm going in to dress," she said. "Stay and see me fly this afternoon."

She ducked into the tent. William Smith was shaking from head to foot.

Outside the little roped off space the crowd was gathering to witness Elsie Frayner's afternoon exhibition. William Smith stepped up to the two mechanicians. He said a few low words. The two men stared at him. Then Elsie's manager came up. Smith grasped his arm. To him Smith began talking rapidly, almost incoherently. Then he uttered a name. The manager jumped a good two feet.

"No!" he cried, staring at the man before him.

"Ask that fellow; I think he knows," said Smith, pointing to one of the mechanicians, and the latter nodded.

"Let me," Smith begged, "I tell you it's my only hope. Let me!"

The manager hesitated. Smith grabbed up one of the mechanician's sweaters, and throwing off his coat pulled it on. Then he climbed stiffly into the Bleriot.

There was a roar of the motor, a whining whirr of the propeller; the onlookers cheered. Like a giant dragonfly the Bleriot shot along its skids and leaped into the air.

Elsie Frayner came out of the tent. She was clad in her leather coat and knickerbockers and leggings; the padded, helmet-like headpiece with its disfiguring ear-laps was in her hand. A blurred speck was shooting higher and higher in the air. She turned to her manager angrily. But she did not utter a word, for her eyes, on the distant speck, saw it swing about and come shooting downward. Faster and faster it came, with dead engine and down-pointed nose. She held her breath; she shut her eyes. Then the engine whirred; down swooped the great, bird-like thing, barely skimmed the earth, shot upward, turned over completely in a wide arc, fluttered to earth and came jarringly to rest.

In it was crouched a swaying, crumpled figure. The manager and a mechanician rushed forward and lifted it out while the crowd yelled itself hoarse.

"In here!" cried Elsie Frayner, leading the way to the dressing-tent and holding back the flap. "Lay him here, on this couch. Now go out, all of you! Yes, you too, Mother, please."

She stepped to the couch on which the man had struggled up, swaying.

"I know you now," she cried. "You're Jim Blanchard—Dare-devil Jim Blanchard. No one else but you could do the loop. What made you—what made you, and after that fearful fall of yours last spring?"

"You said—nerve counted with you," he said between chattering teeth. "I wanted to show you I had it and then to beg you to stop flying again. But I haven't got it. Look at me. I'm a wreck—just a wreck. That fall did it. I wanted to get you out of it before you got like this. Look at me! My nerve's gone. I've been fighting for it ever since I came out of the hospital; but it's gone. I wanted to show you I had a little left, and then I thought perhaps you'd listen to me. But I haven't got it; I haven't got it."

He covered his face with the crook of his arm, and began to cry—loudly, stormily, like a nervous, frightened child.

She sank on the couch beside him. She drew his head onto her shoulder. She stroked his hair.

"Nerve?" she cried. "Talk about your nerve!"

She drew him closer to her. There was something fiercely tender in her strong young arms.

"And you did it for me," she murmured, "to keep me from what you have been through. Listen! Hush, oh, hush and listen! I wont fly again, I promise—nor—nor do anything else except what you say—ever."

A Sheriff On Probation

An Eastern boy undertakes to capture an old-fashioned Western bad-man. The youth presently finds that he himself is the one who is captured, but—he laughs best who laughs last.

By HAROLD DE POLO

WHEN Red Gandle—bad-man, outlaw, murderer—rode up to the Cowman's Chance saloon, entered it with guns drawn, robbed the till and emptied the pockets of the occupants, and left the building with two dead men stretched out on the floor, the sheriff of Lonely Gulch swore that he was the unluckiest man in the whole state of Arizona.

From his own point of view, he was. A capture he had made the previous week had laid him up with a game leg so that he would be unable to move for another ten days; the deputy sheriff was off at Carterstown on one of his habitual sprees; and Red Gandle, the most hated and feared and highly prized outlaw in the state, had been within possible capturing distance while he was lying helplessly on his back. Also, in the little town that was composed of a few stores, two saloons and several dwellings, there was not another man, he was sure, who was exactly itching for the job of trailing and running down the famous outlaw, considered one of the best and craftiest shots in the country. Yes, from his point of view, the sheriff was undoubtedly the unluckiest person in the whole state; for he had been longing for many months that such a chance as this of getting his man would come to him. So he continued tossing about on his bed, fuming angrily at his forced inactivity.

He was interrupted by the entrance of one Neil Rariden, a young man fresh from the East who had come to Lonely Gulch only a short week ago in search of something to do—preferably cow punching, as he said, but who, in consequence of his youth, inexperience and Eastern birth, had been good-naturedly laughed at and told to go back home to his mammy.

Jim Haskins, the stocky, gray-tinged, strong-faced sheriff, looked up and swore. "Well, what in dernation d'yu want?" he growled.

The young man—a grave-faced, farm-raised boy, with a slim, strong figure, a long, lean face and open blue eyes—answered him very quietly and simply. "I want to know if you wont appoint me deputy sheriff? I'd like to follow Red Gandle and arrest him; I just heard of the killings!"

"What the——" The sheriff fell back on his pillow and laughed uproariously. "*Say*—what the——" Again his laughter stopped him from going on.

Neil Rariden did not move a muscle. He repeated his question. "I want to know if you wont appoint me deputy sheriff?"

The older man still let loose his mirth; but, out of the corner of his eye he noticed the calm, determined face of the youngster standing beside his bed. Very suddenly he stopped, sitting bolt upright and peering straight into the eyes of the Easterner—eyes that did not flinch or blink the least bit, he was glad to note.

"Say," he drawled, testing the other, "I reckon yu're lookin' fer a quick road to Fiddler's Green—eh?"

Rariden shook his head and smiled. "You lose! I'm looking for a quick road to make good!"

The officer of the law lowered his bushy eyebrows and scrutinized the boy for the second time. Then, after a moment or two, he told himself that the slim, wiry form, the strong-jawed face, the clear, open eyes, were those of a man who surely had something in him. Anyway, he might as well take a chance; it could certainly do no harm.

"Wanta corral Red Gandle, eh?" he murmured.

"Yes, I do! I want a chance—that's all," answered Rariden firmly, raising his head higher and meeting the other's glance.

For an instant Jim Haskins returned the look; then, with a gritting of his teeth and a crack on the knee with his fist, he burst loudly out, "M'son, yu're goin' to git it! An'—an' if yu *do* land Red, s'help me if you can't have the job o' deputy if you want it! You kin have my thanks an' frien'ship to my dyin' day—too!"

Some fifteen minutes after his interview with the sheriff—which was about two hours from the time that the outlaw had killed the two men—young Neil Rariden rode out of Lonely Gulch, a nickel badge pinned inside his shirt and a document in his pocket appointing him deputy sheriff, while under him was Jim Haskin's special cayuse, a rawboned, long-legged pinto whose speed and endurance were well known. Also, the young Easterner traveled with two valuable assets—a light heart and a sparkle in his eye; for his chance of making good in the West was at last here.

The first day he rode due north over the sun-baked prairie, satisfied to take his time and go about matters very slowly. With minute care he picked out the fugitive's tracks as best he could, even riding several miles out of his way, on branch paths that puzzled him, to inquire at the outlying houses if his man had passed in that direction. From all he could learn from the people and from the hoofprints he followed, it was apparent that Red Gandle had gone straight ahead, convincing young Rariden that his quarry had made for the foothills leading to the thickly grown mountain range. For it was said that the famous outlaw, in a well-nigh impregnable ledge near the mountain top, had built a little shanty to which he always retired after having perpetrated an unusually cold-blooded killing that was likely to stir up indignation for many miles about.

With the prairie for a mattress and his saddle for a pillow, Neil that night slept close to the foothills. The next morning, as the sun rose, he was off on his way to the foothills, feeling fit and refreshed after his sound sleep and his simple breakfast of strong black coffee and dry bread. Once over the foothills, he was positive that his man was in hiding in his little cabin, for at the beginning of the path which led up the steep mountain were the freshly imprinted tracks of the outlaw's horse, deep in the soft earth where it was not touched by the sun.

He rode up the mountain as far as his animal could go, and then, when the winding path suddenly came to an abrupt halt as a heavy tangle rose before him, he dismounted, and unsaddling his horse, hoppled the beast and turned it loose. Then with his rifle on his shoulder—he had learned to shoot a rifle back home and was wise enough to arm himself with one rather than with that far more difficult weapon, a revolver—he made his way cautiously

forward on foot. He found it no easy task, though, to follow the trail through the woods. Paths suddenly ended in barriers of undergrowth, or by a steep rock which it was impossible to ascend, or on the edge of a deep, clean-cut ravine. Nevertheless he succeeded in picking out the tracks apparently taken by Red Gandle, sometimes finding it necessary to go over the same ground four or five times before he was satisfied that he was on the right scent.

All that day he fought his way onward; but at sundown he was still ignorant of his quarry's whereabouts. Then, as the sun sank, he lay down with a sigh, to sleep as best he could until the coming of day, when he could once more take up his quest. His clothes were torn and ragged from his passage through the undergrowth; his hands were cut and sore, and paining with thorn pricks, and his whole body seemed tired and aching. Yet he only gritted his teeth and looked steadily up at the dark blue canopy of night as he told himself that he would find the hut in the morning and show people what he was made of.

With the dawn he was awake, a determined expression on his face as he munched a single hardtack and drank several gulps of water from his canteen —for a fire would disclose his presence. Still higher up the mountain he climbed, again fighting his way through undergrowth and finding it hard to puzzle out the right path. But then, as the golden sun burst out upon the world, he was at last rewarded by seeing a thin spiral of smoke come from somewhere ahead, not a hundred yards away.

It was only natural that this should make his heart pound harder and faster as his quarry was at last before him. Slowly, very slowly, he made his way forward, being careful not to allow the cracking of a twig or the rustling of a leaf to make his presence known. He came to a sharp ridge of rock that rose straight in the air, only a few feet from a deep ravine. There, around the bend in the little path between the ridge and the ravine, was where the smoke came from. He cocked his rifle, and, hugging the wall closely, made his way around the sharp little turn.

Then he stepped back with a gasp at what he saw. There, in front of a very small log cabin built against the rock, was the man he was looking for—red-haired, brutal-faced, wicked-looking. He was bending over a fire between two rocks, on which a coffee pot rested.

Neil Rariden, his chance before him, squared his shoulders, raised his weapon, and stepped forward, his face calm and his voice icy. "Throw up your hands, Red Gandle!" he called, striving desperately to keep hold his rifle steady.

The outlaw, with a heavy grunt, rose up from his kneeling posture. For an instant he looked with wide eyes at the slim young Easterner before him with the leveled rifle in his hand. Then he decided to take his chance. With surprising suddenness, he leaped to one side and his hand flashed to his hip.

But his weapon never came out. The rifle in Neil's hand barked once—for the sheriff had told him to shoot to kill on the least provocation—and Red Gandle staggered, threw up his hands, and toppled over on the ground, lying there like a log.

The young deputy sheriff did not move, but stood there looking at the form on the ground, wondering if he had killed a man. Presently, his gun still pointed at the body, he walked slowly over to the outlaw's side, standing there and carefully scrutinizing the body that did not move the fraction of an inch. He bent down to feel the heart.

Then it was that Neil Rariden paid for his youth and inexperience. The moment his own hand touched the other's breast, ten strong, knotted fingers shot up and clutched him about the throat, taking him so completely by surprise that his gun flew from his grasp and he himself stumbled over, the outlaw on top of him.

He fought desperately; but those terrible fingers pressed in and in and everything was rapidly growing black before him. Through the darkness he heard the outlaw's words. "Thought you'd git me, eh? You damned tenderfoot—thought you'd git me! Why, if my shootin'-iron hadn't got caught in my holster you'd 'a' been dead by now, savvy? Reckoned I could fool you—huh! Yer lead jes' grazed my side, you

fool tenderfoot, an' you thought you'd settled me!"

Then a burst of red and black flooded Neil's eyes and he knew nothing else.

When Neil Rariden regained consciousness he found himself inside the little cabin, lying on the floor with his hands tied behind him. He blinked, stretched his neck that felt so stiff, and looked dazedly about the small room—which was furnished with a table, two chairs, a cupboard and a narrow cot placed against the wall.

He saw no one about; but soon, on listening, he heard the outlaw moving outside. With all his strength he tugged at the rope which bound his arms behind him, doing his best to free himself; but the rope, even though it was but a single strand and not very thick, was exceedingly strong. Then his quick eye looked about the room once more, in search of a knife or some sharp object with which he could cut the bonds that held him. He saw nothing, and came to a sitting posture with a sigh of hopelessness on his lips.

Red Gandle entered the cabin. "Well, well! Hello, young 'un," he mocked, on seeing the sheriff-on-probation sitting up. "Thought you'd come to an' be agreeable, eh?"

Neil remained silent, looking the outlaw straight in the eyes—thinking, thinking!

The other laughed. "Huh, thought you'd caught ole Red Gandle, eh?" His face became hard and ugly. "You fool—you green, tenderfoot fool—d'you think they kin git *me?* Say, you got a nerve, sonny—tryin' to git a man what's put the stuff over on every hanged sheriff an' man hunter in the state! Say, you got a *nerve*—savvy?"

The young Easterner knew that a cool and scornful retort would be the best play he could make. "Oh, I'm not dead yet, remember," he said, carelessly.

Gandle's shaggy, red-bearded face jumped forward on his thick bull neck and he spoke with a malignant hiss in his voice. "No, you aint dead *yet*—but you will be mighty soon—*see?*" He laughed, walked over to the cupboard in the corner, took out a cigar, and slowly lit it. He puffed with great pleasure and then disclosed his plans. "No, you aint dead yet—but you will be mighty soon—*see? Jes'—as—soon—as—this—here—cigar—is—smoked!*"

Neil Rariden felt his throat contract and his heart rise as he looked at the leering face of Red Gandle—for he knew that he had heard the absolute truth. The outlaw would surely do as he had said, probably putting a gun to his head and blowing his brains out.

"Oh, no—my young tenderfoot East'ner! You can't go after snakes an' expec' 'em not to sting you in the end—savvy?" And he laughed coarsely at his wit, moving his cigar to his mouth and drawing a long, long puff as he winked suggestively at the deputy.

Man always feels that he has a better chance for life while on his feet, and so Neil staggered up and stood rocking unsteadily about, his head dizzy and his legs weak from the punishing pressure on his throat.

"Want to die on yer little footsies, eh?" taunted the other. "It's jes' the same to me, you know!"

If he had expected his prisoner to wince, he was disappointed; for Neil, with a smile, agreed that it would be more comfortable in that manner. Then, as he felt very weak, he made his way across the room and leaned up against the table. "Feel a little bit shaky," he admitted, nonchalantly.

Red Gandle puffed at his cigar. "One o' those cool fellers, eh?" he leered, trying his best to unnerve the deputy.

The young Easterner remained silent, contemplating the ceiling in an absent manner. His heart, though, was at a low ebb; for it was not a pleasant prospect that he was facing—inglorious death at his number of years. Again he tugged at the rope, but the thin, wiry hemp held tight.

"Oh, no—you can't break *that* twine," laughed the outlaw, noticing his efforts. Then, his voice merry, he commented, "'Bout a' inch er so gone—eh, sonny?" and he held up the cigar.

"Yes—just about," agreed Neil.

His captor, feeling angry at himself and his victim because he could not frighten the latter and make him beg for mercy, frowned heavily, drew up a chair and, placing it some few feet in front of the deputy, sat down in it and

continued to puff on his cigar with all his might.

Neil Rariden, leaning against the table facing the outlaw, looked into the other's eyes without a flutter of an eyelash, bound to go out of the world, if he must, with a cool head and a brave heart. Again he tried the rope, but it was useless. He thought of making a dash for the door, but then he told himself that he would only be shot in the back. So he did nothing, only standing there staring at the outlaw while the latter puffed and puffed.

Red Gandle, finally, rose from his seat impatiently, knocking the ashes from his cigar and stretching it out close to his prisoner's face. It was burnt more than half way down, and Neil knew that soon the big glowing end would become smaller and smaller, and then—

"Well, sonny, how d'yu feel *now,* eh?" The refugee from the law laughed brutally and stuck the cigar under the deputy's nose.

No answer came. Neil Rariden's face hardened the least bit, that was all.

Red Gandle again put the cigar into his mouth and took a long pull, blowing the smoke into the other's face. "That's what you'll git down below—smoke an' fire!" Then, as he had not entirely got rid of all the smoke before he spoke, he coughed and blinked as some of it stuck in his throat. He put his hand to his mouth and swore, placing the cigar, as he did so, on the edge of the table by his prisoner's side.

"Damn yu," he coughed at Neil.

The young deputy sheriff on probation, as he looked at the cigar by his hip, seemed to go to pieces for the first time since his capture. He stepped in front of the weed so that he might, apparently, hide it from his sight, and broke out in a strained, pitiful, quavering voice.

"Say—say—give me a chance—will you? *Give me a chance!* I—it—I . . . It's hard to die so young—it's awfully hard! I—give me a chance! Please—*please!* I—"

The outlaw stopped his coughing, his face lighting up happily, and broke in with a hard, metallic laugh of joy. "I *knowed* yu'd show yaller yet—I knowed it! Huh, wan' to live, eh? Wan' to *live?* . . . You come huntin' fer *my* blood an' you don' wan' me to git yer own blood! Ha! I knowed I'd make you cry yet—I knowed it!"

Neil's face was white—dead white. He appeared to be laboring under a heavy nervous strain, as if waiting for something of great importance to happen. "I—I . . . *For God's sake let me live!* I—it's hard to die—hard when you're so young—I—" His voice rose to a shriek and he wailed piteously, "For God's sake let me live—*please!*" Then, panting and breathing heavily, he paused and looked at the hard-faced outlaw with a supplicating expression on his drawn features.

Red Gandle stuck his brutal, leering face close up against that of the young deputy, and his deep voice growled out with terrible fierceness. "You'll live, sonny—but you'll live in—"

He was not allowed to finish his words. Suddenly, with a dexterous yank, Neil Rariden's two hands flew from behind him, and his right fist, hard and powerful, caught the outlaw directly on the jaw before he knew what had happened, sending him in a heap on the floor with his senses gone and with the young deputy sheriff on top of him.

It was some ten minutes before the outlaw opened his eyes; and when he did so, he found himself handcuffed at the hands and at the feet. He blinked his eyes and spoke in a dazed manner.

"Say — what — what — what happened?"

Neil Rariden, the young deputy sheriff who had made good, answered the outlaw's question in a voice that told how completely satisfied with the world he was. "Oh, not much! Only there's *one* thing I think you ought to know! When you've got a man trussed up with a single piece of rope, it's awfully foolish to place a burning cigar in a position that will enable him to get the rope against it and burn it through! . . . And, oh—by the way! You were too easily fooled about that begging for life business—but I thought it would distract your attention from that kind cigar!"

The Wreck of the Sea-Horse

The first of a new series of stories describing the further adventures of Matt Bardeen, master diver. Like the previous and the forthcoming stories, this tale narrates one of the many exciting under-water exploits of the old diver, and is of the deepest interest.

By FREDERIC REDDALE

"MATT," said I to my old friend and comrade, "tell me what is meant by barratry on the high seas?"

"Well, m' son," was the slow answer, "t' give it a short an' ugly name, barratry's ship-murder—willfully destroyin' or castin' away a ship, either by burnin', runnin' her ashore, or scuttlin' her. 'Course there's a few other ways, but them's the commonest. An' let me tell you, son, that of all deadly sins, barratry is surest t' find you out, cause why—a ship's like a woman, watched everywhere she goes, an' if you go for t' hurt her, why all the neighbors knows it pretty blame pronto. Ya-as, ya-as."

I went fishing again.

"Were you ever mixed up in a case of barratry?"

Bardeen shot me a quick look from under his gray and grizzled thatch of eyebrow, smoked furiously for a few minutes; then:

"I was that—but I'd 'most forgotten all about it. Wonder what put it into yer head this night of all nights? Why, son, it's—ya-as, ya-as, by gum—it's eighteen years t' the day since the business happened."

"Oh. I merely came across the term a while ago, and made a note that I'd ask you about it, that's all."

Matt grunted in relief at my commonplace reason, and settled back in his big deck-chair.

A hundred and seventy feet above our heads Shinnecock Light was shooting its beams eighteen miles to seaward; a June second-quarter moon hung low in the southern sky, and from the sedge islands and the flats rose the hoarse croak of bullfrogs, blending with the gentle drone of surf on the beach beyond. From within the keeper's cottage came the sound of Mrs. Matt crooning her everlasting "Greenville" over the supper dishes, denoting that all was serene within doors.

Matt rose heavily and clumped inside as the marine clock on the mantel chimed two bells—nine o'clock. I knew he wouldn't be going on duty before eight bells—midnight, and that he probably expected me to help him keep his watch below. So I waited on.

When he returned he took up the talk where he'd dropped it:

"Ya-as, ya-as, ship-murder, that's what barratry is, m' son, an' sometimes murder o' men an' women goes along with it."

"Was it as bad as that in the case you were recalling?" I inquired, merely to keep the ball rolling, for I felt sure that I had unwittingly raised a story out of Bardeen's varied and adventurous past.

"Ya-as, ya-as, m' son—or leastways it was tried on me subsequent."

The veteran deep-sea diver got his faithful pipe going freely, and while he fondled the big Maltese cat perched on his shoulder, he unreeled this tale of marine crime and plotting in his own leisurely and reminiscent way.

"For thirty years, man an' boy, I followed the trade of dipsy diver. First I was a helper, looking after the men's gear, dryin' their suits, an' polishin' up the big copper head-pieces. Then I was promoted to the air-pump, learnin' t' send down the air sweet an' steady—not too slow an' not too fast, 'cause you can suffocate a man in harness workin' fifteen or twenty fathom deep with too much air or too little. Then came the day when I was a proud lad, bein' allowed t' put on the complicated rig an' go down myself with an older diver.

"In those days a dipsy diver's best holt was his nerve an' his own ten finger-bones. There was the same rubber waterproof an' watertight suit, copper clamped an' riveted, with leaden back an' breast plates an' ten-pound lead soles t' y'r boots, all just as we wear nowadays. Same with the big glass-windowed copper helmet. The ordinary tools were few—a crowbar, a hammer-headed axe, an' a big knife like a machete. The wire-wound air-hose was fixed t' the back or top of the headpiece, admittin' air through a valve, an' then there was the life-line, by which a feller under water did all his signaling. But now there's a German chap, so I hear, has invented an oxygen cylinder to be carried on the diver's back, an' that'll do away with the air-hose. Some one compared the hose an' line to a couple of packthreads, an' he wasn't far wrong either. The diver's very life in those days depended entirely on them two packthreads. Ya-as, ya-as.

"But I've lived t' see some mighty fine improvements in the gear, such as the oxygen helmet that stores a small supply in case your air fails; also the electric torch, an' the telephome, an' the water-gun—a big squirt, very serviceable against sharks, swordfish, an' such sea-vermin. All the same, I don't know as we do any better work than we did in the old days; those inventions help some, o' course, but there's queer happenings an' dangers to dipsy divers under water, anywhere from forty t' a hundred an' eighty feet, that all the machinery an' patented things can't foresee or hinder, an' when one o' them crises crops up, Mister Dipsy Diver's jest got t' look out fer hisself.

"This yarn's about the time we went t' raise a yatch in the Bahamas, an' it's a hummer all right. Ya-as, ya-as."

There were two words in particular, that Bardeen's tongue always tripped over. *Yacht* he invariably pronounced "yatch," and *telephone* was always "telephome."

Matt ruminantly sent blue clouds into the breezeless evening air, waiting, as I knew from of old, to arrange his facts or refresh his memory. Then he began to unreel as queer a tale of shore intrigue and marine deviltry as falls to the lot of few men to live through and come out on top.

"Well, son, 'twas this a-away: Me an' Jase Jarvey was raised t'gether on Great South, down Sayville way, clammin' an' oysterin', an' takin' out boatin' parties in summer; goin' to' school an' sailin' our scooters when the Bay was froze in winter. Jase—his full name was Jason K. Jarvey—was weasel smart, an' always gammin' about what he'd do when he'd made his pile—build a big schooner yatch an' sail her hisself. Well, son, every word came true. He went out t' the Coast and made a few millions, more or less; then he came East an' bucked into the Wall Street game. 'Course they trimmed him good an' plenty, but Jase always came up smilin', an' in a year or two he'd trim the other fellows an' get his pile back agen. But 'twas all ups an' downs with him, I guess—rich as old Crœsus one year an' too poor t' pay for a gallon o' gasoline the next.

"However, he got his yatch, the *Sea-horse*—a fine an' dandy wooden schooner, as he'd said, a hundred an'

twenty feet over all, built of Oregon pine, hackmatack knees, an' mahogany trim—big enough an' staunch enough t' sail round th' world. Fact is, he went t' Europe with her, an' lifted a few cups over there. But's far's I could make out, Jase warn't never what you'd call a good sport, or reely popular, though he never had no difficulty in gettin' up a sailin' party.

"Well, son, that brings us down t' the early spring of ninety-two. There was all sorts o' rumors about Jase Jarvey on the Street an' in the papers; some said he was *gastado*—busted—once more, but the cunnin' old fox gave the lie t' that by lettin' it be known that he'd invited a big crowd as guests on the *Sea-horse* for a two months' cruise in the West Indies, an' all about the lavish way they'd be entertained. By all accounts there'd be enough champagne aboard t' drown all hands. The yatch was t' go south with the usual crew and pick up Jase an' his friends at Key West.

"Ten days after the *Sea-horse* sailed, word was flashed north that she'd sprung a leak an' foundered off the Bahamas during a heavy blow an' thick weather, bein' sunk in two hundred fathom. Buckley—that was th' cap'n—an' his crew took to th' yawl, and some time after sunset, by dint of burnin' a flare, all hands was picked up by a coaster, but the yatch was a total loss.

"Cap'n Buckley followed on t' confirm the news, bringing the report of Lloyds' agent at New Providence an' the American consul's *visé*. The crew'd been paid off an' discharged, an' were now scattered God knows where. Then it came out that just before sailing on his West Indian cruise Jase Jarvey had clapped a hundred thousand dollars insurance on *Sea-horse*—which was something he'd never done before. However, everything seemed t' be shipshape, an' seen' that Jase was a pretty big toad in the financial puddle, the insurance folks didn't haggle about payin' over that hundred thousand.

"Then came a most amazin' bit o' news—that the *Sea-horse,* instead of sinkin', as was supposed, had floated long enough t' drift ashore on Cayman Cay, where she'd beached herself an' then sunk fer keeps in twenty fathom. Well, such things do happen, m' son; abandoned ships *have* been salvaged an' towed into port; likewise, they *have* run theirselves ashore; but these latest reports about the yatch made it look like she was a total loss anyhow.

"But some of the underwriters had been hit hard, an' concluded t' see if there wasn't some salvage t' be got out of the wreck, now that she was ashore an' come-at-able—such as all that champagne, for instance—even if she couldn't be raised. So that's how your Uncle Dudley came t' be mixed up with the *Sea-horse* case. Ya-as, ya-as."

Bardeen stopped to fill and kindle his pipe, but I sensed that he was all keyed up, now that we were approaching the crux of the adventure. Then, the glowing pipe making a blob of ruddy color in the darkness, the old diver went on:

"The Merrick people took hold of the job an' despatched their biggest wrecking tug with me an' my two helpers aboard an' a full workin' crew big enough t' pry old Cayman Cay out of its bed. When I'd got aboard an' seen t' the stowin' of my gear I made a queer discovery—there was t' be another dipsy diver along, an' his name was Ned Buckley, which same'd also been *Sea-horse's* skipper. We was t' pick him up at Newport News when we put in there for coal.

"When he come aboard, Mister Buckley assured me that he wasn't goin' along so much as a professional diver as an adviser for the underwriters. Likewise he was interested in findin' out whether the yatch that he'd abandoned could be saved a'ter all. Which was all shipshape an' proper. Seein' as he knew all about the schooner, the insurers no doubt thought he could be serviceable t' the wreckin' captain—who was an old friend of mine, by the way. 'Course, this was all O. K.—on the surface—but why had Buckley sent his divin' gear aboard, with two helpers, same as I'd got? That's what stumped me—for I found out that he'd been a good an' nervy dipsy man 'fore he took up with yatchtin'.

"A week's steamin' found us off Cayman Cay, a crescent-shaped bit of

coral with a few abandoned spongers' and fishermen's huts. There was nothin' t' be seen of *Sea-horse,* 'cause both masts must have gone over the side when she struck—so Buckley said. But 'twas easy enough t' locate the wreck, an' when we were moored alongside with somethin' like twenty fathom of chain out, a good look through a water telescope showed the hull plain enough.

"So, m' son, next mornin' I got ready t' go down an' make my survey, so as t' report on the chances of salvage. The water was so beautifully clear an' quiet an' clean that I made light of the depth—a hundred an' twenty feet. Just as my helmet was being screwed on, Buckley appears in harness, all 'cept his headpiece, sayin' that if I'd no objection he'd like t' go along. 'Course I didn't care—a dipsy diver always likes company, an' in those days I feared neither man nor devil under water. But it suddenly came over me that Buckley had been sent along by *somebody* on purpose t' watch me an' see that I didn't find out too much about the wreck of the *Sea-horse.* But who was that specially interested party?

"Well, with the question still unsettled, I slipped overside. If personal spite was at the bottom of Buckley's presence I knew that neither he nor his helpers could do nothing on deck; my mates would look out for that. So I had no hesitation in going first. Five minutes later Buckley joined me.

"Together we started t' walk right round the wreck on a sea-floor of powdered white coral, which made the light very good. *Sea-horse* was layin' on her stabbord bilge with her stern canted higher than her bows. From the reports I'd expected t' find her bottom half torn out or bilged, 'stead of which we'd got around her bow and abreast of where her mainmast had stood on the port side, an' still there wasn't a broken timber or a splintered seam visible—which struck me as queer, 'cause her port bilge an' after-run as far as the rudder-post, was all visible. I kept sayin' t' myself that it was blamed queer.

"Buckley was right behind me when I saw what I'd been half expectin' t' see. There in the yatch's run, twenty feet from the stern-post, was three of the beautifulest an' cleanest two-inch auger holes you ever saw put in a plank! They'd been done so clean—from inside, o' course—that there was only a few splinters o' white wood showin' through the copper paint where the gimlet point had busted through. In a flash I saw all the hellish plot, an' turning t' Buckley an' pointin' to them auger holes, I shouted:

" 'Scuttled, by God!'

" 'Course he couldn't hear me, but he could see my lips move, an' he knew the game was up. Then he jumped me—a long knife in his fist—so sudden that I went down an' him on top with the force of the lunge, an' there we were, locked in each other's arms, each one strivin' t' reach the air-hose of the other an' thus throttle the life out of him. I was so hoppin' mad that I saw red, an' struggled like sin t' reach my own long knife. If I had, I'd have let the whole Atlantic into the dirty skunk's divin'-gear an' drowned him right there.

"But our very struggles defeated both of us. We was each big men an' strong as bullocks. So long as our air held out neither would let go, an' you can't choke a diver by sheer strength under water, simply 'cause you can't get at his throat. So we just glared at each other through our helmets an' held on, breathin' hard. Neither one of us could get up without the other's help, so there we lay, puffin' like a couple of grampuses.

"At first we had plenty of slack to our air-hose an' life-lines, but gradually we got ourselves snarled up in my life-line. That tautened it, and the jerkin' told the bullies on deck that somethin' was wrong down below, an' seein' that 'twas my life-line that was yankin' an' twitchin' like a water snake, my mates decided t' pull me up.

"Even then neither Buckley nor I would let go of each other, an' when they got us on the tug's deck it took all hands t' pry us apart an' get our helmets off. Then we jest laid an' panted an' glared at each other.

"But somehow I got first wind an' then I let him have it! Guess I called him all the bad names you could think of, from Cain t' Judas, an' when I got through, the wreckin' crew an' our helpers were able t' sense the truth

about the crooked wreckin' of *Sea-horse*. 'Twas a clear job of barratry, with Ned Buckley an' his boss as barrators, facin' twenty years in a Federal prison.

"Well, son, 'twas a case for the sea-lawyers, an' I told the tug's captain that I thought we'd better be on our way back t' little old New York an' tell them what I'd found out. He agreed. While we was runnin' up the coast, Buckley confessed the whole thing.

"Seems that Jase Jarvey had gone bust once more durin' the past winter. He was so tied up and trussed that a few thousand dollars would tide him over an' provide fresh capital. To sell *Sea-horse* would have been to blow the gaff, an' so he an' Buckley planned t' lose her at sea after clappin' on a stiff insurance policy. The yarn about the West Indies party was a bluff; so was the quarts an' quarts of champagne. Seems't Buckley had calc'lated t' sink her well off shore in deep water an' out of soundin's, but he was in too much of a hurry t' make his get-away, or else he made sure she'd sink during the night, with them three holes in her. When the word came that *Sea-horse* had drifted ashore, both Buckley an' Jarvey was properly scairt, you bet! Personally I figured that Buckley had miscalc'lated—either the yatch didn't sink as quick as he'd expected, or else them auger holes'd swelled an' partly closed—which might easily happen to a wooden boat. When them conspirators discovered that the underwriters were sendin' out a dipsy diver they realized that the jig was up for them if that there diver ever lived t' tell what he'd seen. So Jase gets Buckley sent along, friendly like, with orders t' cook my goose under water an' fake up some yarn so as nobody'd be the wiser.

"Jase an' Buckley was both tried an' convicted; Jarvey died in jail before sentence an' Buckley was pardoned after servin' five years of his time."

"But what about his murderous assault on you?" I queried. "Was nothing done to him for that?"

"Well, m' son, I never pressed that charge ag'in' the poor devil. 'Course I had t' give my evidence, an' all that, but Buckley hadn't reely done me no harm, an' I felt that he'd been punished enough. I knew he'd never get a chance to murder another ship anywheres this side o' Tophet—an' by all accounts there's no ships down there."

Both Sides of a Story

By SIDNEY HODGES COLE

I

THE OBVERSE SIDE

CHARLIE BARROWS approved of her, so you may be very sure she was strong on looks. Indeed, there was something more than approval in his eyes as he let them travel from the wavy chestnut hair along the smooth, soft-tinted cheeks, and the white, well-rounded throat, and so down the pretty curves, showing here and there through the long, saffron-colored rain-coat to a pair of very shapely, silk-clad ankles. Yes, there was more than approval in Charlie Barrows' close-set eyes at that moment; there was enthusiasm. He put her down as just turned eighteen.

She was just stepping into the wide entrance of the Imperial Theatre when

Charlie saw her. A moment later, he too was stalking towards the box-office whither she was making her dainty way.

"An aisle seat in the second balcony for to-night, if you have it," Charlie, close behind her now, heard her say in a voice that was as pretty in its way as her face and figure. "Yes, just one."

A ticket was whisked out, a half-dollar whisked in.

"One in the second balcony for to-night," said Charlie, stepping to the window from which she moved away, and planking down a half-dollar.

Her seat proved to be on the left of the balcony; Charlie's, three rows farther back, was on the right. She was taking off her hat as an usher showed him to his seat. There was even more of that wavy chestnut hair and it was far prettier than he had imagined at that first glimpse of her with her hat on.

Charlie left his seat, went down to the coat room and returned with a pair of rented opera-glasses. Through them he studied her unobtrusively and at decent intervals.

He noticed with satisfaction that she was quite alone. Some student at one of the many educational institutions in the city, he told himself—careful of her slender funds, too; the second balcony seat told of that. Charlie smiled quietly to himself. Then, after another brief interval, he turned the glasses on her again.

What a raving little beauty she was, with the eyes of a child and the lips of a child and the cheeks of a child and the eager forward poise of a child, as she watched the ushers in the balcony below and on the floor hurrying people to their seats.

The orchestra was just finishing the overture. Loud flourishes of brass and much thumping of the tympani told of its approaching modulation into a curtain cue. Charlie stared through the glasses until the house lights were switched off, the curtain went up and the usual shrill of female voices announced the opening chorus. Then he bethought him to look at the program in his hands to discover the name of the show he was gracing.

He found it to be "'THE MAID AND THE MILITANT.' A Musical Extravaganza In Three Acts, By—" But Charlie Barrows did not care in the least who it was by. Neither did he care for the opening number by a chorus of suffragettes. The only thing in the house he did care about he could no longer see plainly on account of the darkness.

Barrows arose and tiptoed down to the telephone booth in the foyer. Here he called a number and after a brief interval dropped his nickel into the slot.

"Hello! This Brophy's? Say, is Billy Shannon there—All right. Put him on the wire, will you?—Hello! This Billy? —Well, this is Charlie—Yep, Charlie Barrows. Say, Billy, want to do me another of those favors?—Sure, same price—Uh-huh! I'm down at the Imperial—second balcony."

He paused to draw his seat-check from his vest pocket and consult it.

"E-56, is my seat. It's an aisle seat, on the right—All right. I'll look for you about ten or so, will I? No. I don't know what time the show breaks, but you better get round early. So long!"

Then he went down to the smoking-room and lost himself in cigar smoke and day-dreams until the place began to fill up at the first intermission.

Whereupon he quitted the smoking-room and went back to his seat. The greater part of the time until the house was again darkened for the second act, his opera-glasses were trained toward the left of the balcony.

The second act was drawing to a climactic and highly tuneful close when Barrows felt a light touch on his arm. Looking up, he beheld a faultlessly-dressed young man whose hair was prematurely streaked with gray, smiling down at him from the aisle.

"Hello, Billy!" he said under his breath, and forthwith got out of his seat and stalked up the aisle with the newcomer to the back of the balcony.

They moved over to the aisle at the left. Charlie Barrows laid a hand on the other's arm.

"Aisle seat, three rows back on the right-hand side," Barrows instructed under his breath.

Shannon's eyes sought the spot indicated, and he grunted.

A crisp bill came out of Barrows' pocket and found its way into Billy Shannon's palm.

"Same old gag?" Billy asked.

Barrows nodded his assent.

The last act proved to be a short one. At a little after ten-thirty the final curtain was down, asbestos and all. There was a great clattering of upturned seats, a buzz of many voices, the steady clatter of feet on the balcony stairs.

Charlie Barrows, standing in an inconspicuous corner of the foyer, saw the little lady of the chestnut hair descend. Close behind her was Billy Shannon, and in passing him, Billy Shannon tipped him a broad and a meaning wink. Barrows followed them in the outward surging crowd.

The saffron-colored raincoat turned sharply to the left at the sidewalk and headed uptown; after it trailed Billy Shannon, and after Billy Shannon came Barrows. In this order they moved several blocks uptown.

They were out of the crowd now. The raincoat turned into a cross street. Billy Shannon, with a little guarded cough, hurried forward.

It was a deserted little cross street. One lone pedestrian besides themselves was visible, and he far down on the other side. Billy Shannon was close to the girl; he had spoken to her. She turned, glanced at him, and hurried on. Shannon's steps grew quicker. He was beside her; he touched her arm.

It was at this juncture that Barrows came hurrying up. His hat was lifted. There was an air of solid respectability about him. He carried an excellent presence at such times, did Charlie Barrows. Maybe much practice had something to do with it.

"Pardon me," he said incisively, "but is this chap annoying you?"

"Yes," said the girl a little breathlessly.

"He is some one you know?"

She shook her head. Barrows was sure she was too frightened to speak.

"Beat it, my friend!" he said sharply to the scowling Shannon, who forthwith slunk away, grinning the minute his back was turned to them, and fingering the ten-dollar bill in his pocket.

"Now you'd better let me put you on a car," said Barrows, still the coldly courteous gentleman.

"It's only a little way to where I live," the girl demurred.

"Then perhaps you'll let me see you safely the rest of the way," he suggested. "That contemptible cur—"

"If you'd be so good," she interrupted.

Barrows could be very engaging when he chose. She told him she was studying music at the Conservatory; that her home was in West Compton; that she thought "The Maid And The Militant" was a wonderfully bright and tuneful show. They were like old friends before they had gone three blocks. Barrows' eyes were glistening. They shot dull fire every time he looked down at her there beside him. The nearness of her, her sweetness and innocence, sent streaking fires through his veins. His eyes, had you noticed them closely, were those of the weasel watching the rabbit.

So they moved uptown, the smoldering fires within him threatening to break into open blaze every time she smiled up at him in that pretty way of hers, or when some unevenness of the sidewalk brushed her arm against his.

She was quite alone in the city, she told him, and she told it with a little lisp in her speech—just the barest impediment which added to her childishness and sent the blood coursing yet more hotly through his veins. He looked down at those smooth, firm cheeks and the big gray eyes, looking up to him with such gentle confidence. He felt the ice was breaking beautifully. And that was what counted—the way the ice was broken.

They were passing Clavering's, a certain rather unsavory hotel with a yet more unsavory rathskeller in its basement. A couple of taxies had just swung up to the curb, and were even now unloading their rather too loudly laughing fares. Barrows heard his name called.

"Hello, Charlie Barrows!" some one said.

He turned. A stout man with a purply red face was helping an over-dressed young woman from one of the taxies. It was she who had spoken. A sudden fierce resentment flared up in Barrows —resentment that the woman should

have spoken to him; not on his account, but because of the smooth-cheeked girl beside him. He lifted his hat and bowed very coldly. Involuntarily his steps had quickened. Behind him he heard a sardonic snicker.

Outwardly unmoved by it, he was raging inwardly, raging that the woman had spoken to him at all. And yet, he reflected, this very over-dressed woman with the red faced man had once walked beside him as this girl was now walking. Once—three years ago—Billy Shannon had annoyed her, and he had come to the rescue. Once he had thought of her as he now thought of the girl beside him, as something ineffably sweet and innocent and—

And now he was annoyed because she called his name—because she spoke to him while this other girl was with him.

Somewhere down in Charlie Barrows' make-up was a tiny spark of decency. It began to assert itself now. He walked along silently, heedless of the chatter of the girl at his side. Some day, perhaps, this girl would speak to him and he would be annoyed. *She* perhaps would be on the arm of just such another man with a purply red face. *She* would snicker sardonically if he bowed to her coldly. He glanced at her thoughtfully out of the corners of his eyes. She was such a pretty little thing, so sweet, so childish—his soul went sick within him. Charlie Barrows was not used to maladies of the soul. It startled him considerably, and frightened him not a little.

He stopped short beneath a light.

"You live somewhere near here?" he inquired in a strange voice.

"Just a step or two on—" she began.

He interrupted her almost fiercely.

"Don't tell me where you live," he said in harsh tones.

She looked at him with widened eyes.

"Why," she began again, "why—"

"Listen," he said. "You're a good child—an innocent child. I think you're the sort that still says your prayers. Well, pray with all your heart and with all your soul that you may be delivered from—such as I. Good-night!"

He lifted his hat, turned sharply on his heel and walked away without one backward glance. He was calling himself all conceivable kinds of a doddering ass; but in his heart was a glow that none of his many conquests had ever given him.

II

THE REVERSE SIDE

HELENE CASS—until the last three years she had always been Nellie Cassidy—took out her latch key and let herself into the hallway of the apartment house at number 64 Harlow Street. Number 64 was an ornate affair of pressed brick, with beveled plate glass in its outer door and two imposing lightposts on either side of its steps.

Somewhere across the roofs a clock chimed eleven. Helene entered the automatic elevator, pressed the third floor button and went whirring upward. At the third floor she alighted, poked down a long hallway, crashed with a humped shoulder through a pair of swinging doors covered with green baize, turned into a lateral hall and inserted another key in a doorway which bore the gilt numerals 38.

As she entered, another girl stuck her head out of the little kitchenette, from which came sundry fruity odors and the tinkle of ice on glass.

"For the love of Pete, Nell, where've you been all this time?" she asked. "You said you were just going to run downtown for a pair of pumps."

"I dropped into the show at the Imperial," said Helene—or Nellie; take your choice.

She had thrown off her saffron-colored raincoat, disclosing a simple black skirt and a plain shirtwaist with a rolling collar. She was an extremely pretty girl, even with her brows puckered as they were now.

"Like that!" chided the girl in the kitchenette doorway.

"I went quite alone, Ida," said Helene. "I sat in the second balcony."

"For the love o' Pete!" chortled Ida St. Clair—at least that was the name on the letter box.

She wiped her wet hands on the long and not over-clean apron which protected her dress of pale pink silk. Also she flounced out her hair—or perhaps, better, the hair she wore.

"Well, get dolled up," she instructed. "Walter Bagg has just 'phoned that he and Eddie Thomas are coming over here at half-past eleven. I been makin' some punch."

Helene seemed not to have heard. She stood leaning one shoulder against the green paper of the little hallway. Her brows were still puckered in that frown.

"You aint got any too much time. Get busy!" Ida advised.

Helene straightened up. She cleared her throat. She took off her hat and tossed it onto the table.

"I'm going home to-morrow," she said.

"You're *what*?" asked Ida, stirred by something in the other's tone.

"I'm going home—to West Compton—the first thing in the morning," she repeated. "I'm not going to doll up any to-night; and I aint going to see Wally Bagg or Eddie Thomas."

It was a very tiny apartment—just two rooms and a bath and the closet-like kitchenette. Helene went into the room where was the big brass bed and plumped down on the side of it. Ida came out of the kitchenette and followed her into the bed-room.

"Say, what's eatin' you?" she demanded. "What's happened?"

Helene pushed back her thick chestnut hair—it was all her own. She picked up a little silver buffer from the near-by dressing-table and began idly to polish the nails of her slender fingers.

"I met a man to-night," she explained. "A nice man he was. He took me for a kid."

"Huh?" said Ida. Then she laughed.

"Well, you do look pretty kittenish when you put that shirtwaist on," she admitted. "And it broke your heart when he found you wouldn't never see twenty-seven again, I suppose."

Helene shook her chestnut head.

"He didn't find out," said she. "You see, I went into the show at the Imperial and sat in the second balcony like I told you. When I came out, a man followed me. Coming through Gardner Street he came up close and spoke to me. Before I could answer up comes another man and asks if the first one's been annoying me, and sends him packing and walks along with me. I told him I was a student at the Conservatory. I guess I made a hit with him from the way he kept looking at me. Well, anyway, when we got up to Greenacre Place, he stopped short on the corner. He looked at me awful queer. He asked me if I lived far and when I went to tell him, he stopped me. 'Don't tell me where you live,' he says. Then he looks at me again that queer way and says: 'You're a good little girl. I think you're one of the kind that still says your prayers. Pray with all your heart and all your soul that you may be delivered from such as I.' And off he goes before I can say a word."

Ida began to laugh delightedly, but at the look on Helene's face she stopped short. "Well, what of it?" she asked.

Helene was intent on her nail polishing. She did not look up.

"I never realized before what it meant to have anyone think of you like that," she said. "I'm going back to West Compton in the morning. I'm going to work in the box factory there like I used to."

"Yes, you are!" Ida scoffed. "You're going to put on some glad rags and you're going to hurry, too. Those boys'll be here any minute now. For the love o' Pete, what are you doing now? Crying? Well, hurry up and get a chamois on your nose. It's getting all red."

Helene was sniveling. Firmly she got off the bed; firmly she took Ida's arm and propelled her into the hall and shut and locked the door. Nor did pleadings nor threats nor taunts through the keyhole avail with her.

Presently she heard the disgusted Ida at the telephone in the next room.

"Hello! This 2445-M South?—this you, Annette?—Say, you alone?—well, run over here, wont you?—yep, Walter and Eddie are coming right over and Nell's got the sulks. Locked herself in and wont answer me—yep, they're going to bring the feed. . . . Uh-huh! Hurry along!"

Helene heard her bustling about the kitchenette, muttering to herself. There were still tears in Helene's big gray eyes, but she was smiling through them as on a little time-table in her lap she looked up the earliest morning train for West Compton.

The Man Who Was Mad

A life-story of the most unusual sort is unfolded in this vivid drama of the coal mines. It is one of the best of this fine series of stories dealing with the "diggers of black diamonds."

By CHARLES WESLEY SANDERS

LIKELY had been smelling the gas for half an hour. There had not been much of it, but it annoyed him. Once or twice he had taken his open lamp from his cap and run it along the roof in the hope of finding a small accumulation and burning it out. But he had found no gas.

"Maybe," said the loader who worked alongside him, "it's in another room. It may just be seeping in here. If it is in another room and comes in here this strong, we'll prob'ly hear from it before long."

The speaker was he whom the other miners in the Alice mine called mad. He was a man of forty, bald, thin, with a sallow face, and watery, uncertain blue eyes.

"You're a cheerful guy, aint you?" Likely asked. "I suppose, now, in the Mandrake mine—"

"Yes, that time I was in the Mandrake mine—" the other began.

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Joe, shut up," Likely said. "I'm kiddin' you. I don't want to hear about the Mandrake mine. I've heard enough about it. You're nutty."

Joe looked at him in a queer, puzzled way as if he felt that in some odd fashion the charge might be true. His soul was in twilight through which he only glimpsed his past.

The car into which the men had been shoveling coal was full now. The driver started the mules; the trapper opened the door, and the car passed through it. Likely turned to edge himself between another car and the wall. The timbering had been put in closely and there was not space enough for his body. He put his hand on the car to climb into it.

At that moment the blast came. The gas had been slowly and then swiftly gathering in a room beyond the one in which Likely and Joe worked. All at once there had been a rush of it. The open lamp of some miner had encountered the rush. Flame and gas had met.

The next thing Likely knew he lay against a timber. He had been dimly conscious of being blown far down the room and bringing up against this timber. After his impact with it there had been a moment of merciful blankness. When he first opened his eyes, he was aware of no pain. Only a great fear gripped him. He had known, as every coal miner knows, that accidents will

happen; but this was his first. He wondered shiveringly if he were to die.

Then the pain began. It was slight at first—in his hip. The hip felt as if it had been bruised. He tried to move it a little, but there was no life in it. Then the pain leapt through his body. It gripped him like a living thing and shook him till the sweat came out on his blackened face. He was conscious, too, of a burning sensation in his lungs. He knew there must have been some fire, but there was none now. . . . Suddenly he thought of Joe.

"Joe," he tried to yell, but his voice was a thin piping.

He rolled his eyes, seeking just a flicker of light somewhere. There was none. He found then that he was breathing through his mouth, and that the taste of the air was hot and bitter. What if the explosion had blown out the fan?

"Good Gawd!" he moaned, and he closed his eyes as the horror of the situation dawned upon him.

He was alone in a closed, airless room, two hundred feet below the surface of the earth and half a mile from the bottom of the shaft. Oh, for the upper world and the sun and the air!

He came to himself shudderingly again. Horror had sent him to oblivion for a brief space. He wondered if he would go mad as Joe had gone mad in the Mandrake mine. And he had been among those who had laughed at Joe—at the mild, patient man who constantly sought auditors for the tale of what he had been through in one of the worst disasters in the history of mining.

"Joe!" he screamed in a sudden frenzy.

Seeming faint and far, an answering cry came to the ears of the injured man. He screamed again. Again the answer came, nearer. Out of his desire for the presence of a human being was born the knowledge that one was creeping toward him. He waited for a thing of flesh and blood to join him in this hell. And then he heard a voice almost at his elbow:

"Where are you?"

He tried to raise himself but because of the pain he sank back.

"Here I am," he said.

A hand touched his face.

"Who are you?" Joe's voice asked.

"It's me—Likely," he answered.

"Likely? I guess I don't know you."

"Aren't you Joe Malach?"

"Yes. That's my name. . . . Where did Lebhart go?"

"Lebhart? There aint nobody in here by that name that I know of."

"I suppose he's dead. . . . The air is bad back here. It's clearer forward. We'd better move up. Can you crawl?"

"My hip is busted," Likely whimpered.

The strangeness of Joe's tone and actions—the unfamiliarity of them—were hideous. He must have gone madder, thought Likely, than he had been before.

"I'll have to drag you back where I was," Joe said. "There's a little current of air there. You'll die here. . . . It'll hurt when I move you."

He took Likely by the shoulders and moved him a little. Likely's scream rang through the room—the scream of a man in unendurable agony. Malach stopped moving him and let him rest a minute.

"Leave me here," Likely said. "I'd rather die here than be moved another inch."

"You'll faint pretty quick," Malach said.

He took hold of Likely's shoulders again and dragged him a full foot. Likely's scream died on his lips almost before it was born. As Malach had predicted, he fainted. Malach, on his knees, guiding himself with his left hand, dragged Likely forward with the other. At last he got back to the spot where there was a little current of air, like a tiny stream trickling through a desert.

It revived Likely presently, and despite his great pain, it gave him some strength.

"Did you get me to where you wanted me?" he asked.

"Yes," Malach said; and they were silent.

There was no sound in the mine now except when a loosened piece of coal fell. Likely could not bear the silence.

"Are you there, Joe?" he asked.

"Yes; I'm here. . . . I was just tryin' to figure things out. You say your name is Likely. I thought I was loadin' with Lebhart. I—"

"Good Gawd, Malach, don't talk in that crazy way," Likely moaned. "What ails you? We been loadin' together for a month."

"What mine is this?"

"The Alice. The Alice, of course. You ought to know me. We been boardin' together up at Mrs. Deegan's. You had the front room downstairs just as you go in off the street. Try not to be nutty."

"I thought I was in the Mandrake mine."

Likely's scream shattered the silence.

"Talk quiet to me—sane," he pleaded. "Tell me a story. Anything to keep my head from shooting into small pieces."

"Huh," said Malach. He was silent for a few seconds. "I've just found out that I'm hurt, too. My head is bleedin'. I guess it's nothin' serious. I guess maybe I've been off my trolley since the Mandrake explosion. Maybe this has set me right. I don't remember coming to this mine at all. When I got my senses back a while ago I thought I was in the old Mandrake. . . . What state is this Alice mine in?"

"Central part of Ohio."

"Oh, well, the Mandrake is in Pennsylvania. . . . Yes, I just went completely bughouse and wandered over here. We was in the Mandrake for a long—"

Likely groped in the dark till he touched the other miner.

"My head feels funny," he said weakly. "Please, please, talk about something else. . . . If you don't, I'll kill you when I get out of here."

Malach seemed to feel the change in him from pleading to hysteria.

"All right, son," he said soothingly. "Don't you worry. We'll get out of this all right. This aint much of an accident. The air has been holding fairly well. That shows the fan has been workin' some. Now, you quiet down. I'll just keep on talkin' to you in a ramblin' kind of way."

"Move me a little. Put something under my head."

Malach moved him and he lay and moaned. Then, in spite of Malach's optimism, the two men realized that the air was beginning to thicken. They could not last long unless help came soon. The deadly black damp would crowd down upon them even if the fan at the mouth of the shaft was running top speed in an attempt to flood the mine with air.

"Lebhart an' me—" Malach began. Likely stirred uneasily. "I aint goin' to talk about bein' down in a mine," Malach went on. "Lebhart an' me was pals. Lord, we was great old pals. We'd been brought up together from the time we was trappers when we was fourteen years old, and we had never been separated. Where one would get a job, the other would get a job.

"Well, the day of the accident in the Mandrake, we was workin' side by side just as you an' me was to-day." Likely did not protest by movement or word now. "When she let go, Lebhart was caught under a bunch of coal from the roof and pinned to the floor. I couldn't remember that till just a minute ago, but it's all comin' back to me. I was bunged up some, but it shouldn't have been enough to lead me to do what I done.

"The only explanation I can give is that the accident was so awful it took my nerve. I become confused. It wasn't like it is here with just you an' me sittin' and talkin' quiet. Men burned almost to a crisp was layin' around in bunches, and the fire was eatin' toward 'em an' there seemed no way out. That's the kind of an accident that was.

"Well, there was Lebhart layin' there on the floor, pinned down. I stooped over him to see if he was dead, and a piece of coal dropped down and hit me on the head. It was a good, sizable piece of coal and everything went black for a minute. I come to, leaning against a timber and moppin' the blood from my face. Where Lebhart was I hadn't the least idea. I guess he must have been dead even then.

"Well, as I stood there, I heard a cracklin' sound, and there was a wave of heat in my face. I turned and beat it. I went from room to room, takin' chances that no ordinary man would

take. You see, I was clear bughouse then. Finally I brought up in a room where the door was jammed shut with coal on the other side. There I stayed for three days and three nights, not knowin' when the fire would get to me. How I got out I don't know. I guess the rescuers must have got me all right, because I'm here, and I suppose I just wandered over here and got a job. Where'd I show up first?"

"At the mine. They were short. They had some rush orders. They were putting on all the men they could get hold of. I took you over to my boarding house. You've been working here for a month. You don't mean to say you don't remember."

"I can't remember anything except bein' hit by that coal an' runnin' an' bein' in that room. Well, I got my mind back, I'm happy to say."

Likely was not sure that he had got his mind back. He was not sure even yet that he was not crazier than ever."

"Do you think we'll get out of this?" he asked from the misery in which he lay.

"I think so," Malach said. "Are you breathin' a little harder?"

Likely began to moan.

"I was afraid to mention it," he said. "I hoped it wasn't so. The air is dying in here. They said it would stay fresh for a good many hours even with the fan shut off."

"It would stay fresh, but you see the gas is eatin' the life out of it," said Malach patiently. "I been noticin' for some little time that it was dyin'."

Likely gritted his teeth. In spite of his agony, in spite of his horror of being left alone, he had to play a man's part and give Malach his chance.

"Well, there may be better air further on," he said. "Go ahead and find it. I'll get along somehow."

His voice almost broke on the last few words, for he was little more than a boy compared with Malach; and Malach had been through the mill before, worse than this.

"I wasn't thinkin' about that at all," Malach said in his even voice. "I was thinkin' about movin' you. It'll hurt considerable more."

Likely moaned again. Experimentally he moved the broken leg. His scream filled the gas-laden room.

"I can't stand it," he cried. "It'll kill me. . . . Malach . . . Ah . . . Couldn't you put me—out? Nobody'd ever know."

"Not on your life," Malach answered. "You're better than half a dozen dead men. . . . But I've got to move you, son. I'll be as gentle as I can."

He stooped and put his hands under Likely's shoulders. But he had no intention of being gentle. He knew that Likely, conscious, could not stand the pain of what might follow. Suddenly he thrust an arm under Likely's legs and lifted him. As he had hoped, he felt Likely shudder and grow still.

He got across this room without difficulty and found the door. But he had to put Likely down before he could get the door open, and when it did swing back and he had got Likely through it and closed the door again, Likely had recovered consciousness. The moving had sent great shuddering pains through him. He was very weak. But Malach bent to pick him up again.

"A minute, just a minute," Likely begged. "Give me time to get a breath of this air. Ah, Gawd, that's good. It's air, Malach. It's real air. Let me lie here."

Malach bent beside him and put his hand on his forehead.

"It aint air, son," he said. "You been sweatin' an' it's cooler in here. That's all. We got to go on. It would be a sin to give up when there aint no fire. You don't want to die, do you?"

"I'd rather die than go through that again," Likely answered. "Besides, you got yourself to think about. I don't want you to give up your life for mine. You might be almost to the shaft by now."

Malach knew this argument was specious. He was aware that the younger man merely wanted him to let him lie. And he had an argument of his own which was sound.

"Listen, son," he said. "You know I've just got my mind back. It's had enough to occupy it since it cleared up. But just think of me when I get out of here. I'll be continual sayin' to myself that I let my pal Lebhart die the

death of a dog. I'll suffer the tortures of the damned. But if I can just say to myself that I saved you I'll feel a good deal better. Will you do that much for me—just stand for a little torture till I can get you to a place where I'm sure there is air? Then I'll let you lie and I'll stick along with you till the end. I give you my word I wont leave you, even if I can save myself."

Likely's earlier approach toward hysteria showed a nature in which sentiment might be expected to run freely. He took Malach's statement at its face value.

"Give me half a minute, Joe," he said.

He lay still; Malach stood beside him. Malach's head was beginning to ache. He had had a good deal of trouble in keeping the blood which was flowing from his own wound, out of his eyes. His face was burned a little and blackened, and he had nothing but his grimy hands to wipe the blood away with.

"Can you come now, son?" he asked.

"Lift me quick," Likely said.

Malach took him up as quickly and as skillfully as he could. This time Likely did not faint. His body had involuntarily braced itself for the shock and withstood it. He screamed twice and then lay moaning in Malach's arms. Four times Malach had to put him down to open doors as they passed to as many rooms. In the last three rooms they had come upon other miners. They were now reaching the part of the mine where the most men had been at work.

Victims hearing them pass called to them piteously. At last Malach could stand their appeals no more and he put Likely down and stepped among them to give them a word of cheer, which was all the help he had to offer. Then he took Likely up again and continued his way. They came to the fifth room. Malach put Likely down.

"They save us from here or they don't save us at all, son," Malach said. I can go no further. I'm about done. Can you feel air?"

"Yes," Likely whispered. "It's air. It tastes good, Joe. Joe, if I don't make it an' you do, remember that I said you was the finest guy I ever met."

"That's all right, son. A-a-h!"

"What's the matter?" Likely whispered again.

"I got a little cut on my head. The pain is gettin' kind of sharp. The blood runs down. . . . What's that? . . . What's that, son?"

There was a kind of exultation in his voice. A "hallo" had sounded distantly. It was repeated.

"They're coming," he cried. "They're coming. I told you we'd get out of this all right."

The "hallo" came again. They heard the opening of a door. A light came into view—a safety lamp which the gas would put out if it became dangerous.

"Here's a couple," Malach yelled.

The light stood still a moment.

"Where are you, men?" a voice boomed out.

"Good Gawd, I've gone mad again," Malach moaned. "It aint a light. It aint nothin'."

But the light moved on. The door was opened again. More lights came in. The first light was near the two men. Malach stood up with difficulty.

"Who is it?" he asked.

The owner of the light reached up and took it from his cap. Then he held it close to Malach's face. The face was thin and worn with toil and with the present strain. The black on it was run through with streaks of red. Across the bald head there was a long gash.

"It's you, aint it, Joe?" the voice boomed out.

"Yes. I'm Malach. Who are you?"

The owner of the lamp held it close to his own face. That face was broad and ruddy and above it was a crop of the yellow hair of a typical Slav.

"Well, you old war-horse," Lebhart cried, "I've found you at last. Don't say you're still nutty. I been grievin' my young life away about you. I didn't git no trace of you till day before yestiday. Then I come right on here. I guess I got along about in time, hay? I been leadin' some of the boys through these forward rooms. . . . Who else you got here?" he added, bending to cast the feeble rays of his lamp on Likely. "Pretty badly hurt, hay? Here, boys, a stretcher for a man with a busted leg. . . . An', by the Lord,

another for a man with a busted head. . . . He's just gone under."

Lebhart and the others had got all the injured and the few dead out by night, and they rested from their labors at Mrs Deegan's boarding-house. Likely was in the hospital and Malach lay upstairs with a bandage about his cut head, now thoroughly cleansed.

Likely's story had got out, and talk buzzed about the man whom they had thought mad.

"The doc' says it aint rare, as he calls it, for a man to go nutty from one blow an' get his noodle back from another," said Lebhart by way of explanation. "This guy Malach is the best they make. Take it from me."

He was a big man, and they "took it from him" for a moment. But there were other big men present.

"What's this talk about him leavin' you to die in the explosion at the Mandrake mine?" one of these asked.

Lebhart took his pipe from his mouth and stared at the questioner.

"Where did you get that yarn?"

The man told him the story as it had been gathered from Likely, after Likely had been interviewed by the constantly arriving newspaper men.

"Malach told it himself."

"Oh, Malach was nutty in the Mandrake mine and after," said Lebhart. "Listen: When I went down under that pile of coal, Malach dug me out after he had been knocked silly by a falling lump. I was almost dead to the world. I couldn't help myself. I weigh about a hundred and eighty. That skinny little guy carried and dragged me away from the fire as far as he could go. . . . And he thinks he ran by himself."

That satisfied them and they sat and lost themselves in admiration for a while. But one thin-lipped young fellow who hadn't been in the mine was inclined to be skeptical.

"Malach might just as well have let Likely lay where he was and not go toting him through the mine with a busted leg," he said. "You fellows got clear through to where they'd been."

"Yes, we got through," said Lebhart slowly. "But, my friend, there was an explosion in that room just before we got there. It wasn't much—a pocket and a spark left in a lamp somebody had dropped. But there wouldn't have been no Malach and no Likely to-night if Malach hadn't done what he done. Why, he was the whitest man I ever met even when he was crazy."

He got to his feet and stretched his big body. His blue eyes were alight. He looked about upon them.

"Anyway, I know the man," he said. "By Gawd, I'm his friend. He's on'y a poor, bald headed, patient, kind old duffer, but I don't want no better man aside me at the showdown."

"Trusty"

By RICHARD POST

"BONY" BURNS awoke with a start. The grayish tints of dawn were dispelling the deep blackness of the little cell. In the corridor, an electric light burned dimly as if weary of its all-night vigil. From far down the other end of the ward came the creaking steps of the guard. That settled it in Burns' mind. The faint light and the footfalls above him told, as plainly as if he could have switched on an electric and consulted a watch under his pillow, that Kennedy was making his four-thirty count.

A half-hour remained for a nap. At five o'clock the key would rasp in his door and in those of the three adjoining cells. The four teamsters, half asleep, would tumble out into the faint light and pass through the front gate to the barns.

"Bony" wondered dully what had wakened him, for, wearied by hard work, he was accustomed to sleeping soundly. Still, the reason did not matter. He was too tired to care. Stretching out his long body, he was just falling into a light doze, when something moved beneath him. Through the mattress he felt the warm pressure of a human body.

Instantly, lying rigid, he was wide awake. Two days before, a convict, one John Evans, had "hidden out" in an attempt at escape. Since then, during the daylight hours, the twenty acres within the prison enclosure had been ransacked, and at night, lanterns burned on the walls, and guards with loaded guns paced between the towers. With a flash of comprehension, "Bony" knew that the fugitive lay beneath him.

Burns was a trusty, but his first act was that of instinct. The class loyalty of the inside suddenly proved all-powerful.

"Lie still, kid; the screw will be here in a minute," he whispered, leaning over the side of the cot.

No answer came, but a low sound that might have been a sob or a moan. Whoever was beneath him remained motionless as the lantern's rays darted swiftly over the bare walls. Without pause, the heavy steps moved on. Kennedy was conscientious; there was no real need to send the flash into the teamsters' cells, but it was regulations. Like all men in a rut, he obeyed to the letter.

Burns thought hard. What should he do? He knew it meant a written report, disgrace, the loss of his trusty job if he delayed informing the officers as to his discovery. He had acted on the impulse of the moment, but now reason began to assert itself.

Yet to squeal was unforgivable! Since the day when Burns had entered the prison, and with the first glimpse of his angular, spare figure, his cognomen of Bonaparte has shifted to "Bony"—during these five years he had never squealed. The quiet, pleasant-mannered young farmer, possessing as he did the confidence of the officers, yet retained the friendship of his fellows. Under the indeterminate sentence law of the state, Burns was doing from seven and a half to fifteen years for manslaughter. The judge had given him the limit, the minimum the half of the maximum, when the jury, in opposition to his honor's wishes, had reduced the charge from first degree murder. Burns, however, stoutly maintained that his act had been entirely in self-defense. Among the officers a general belief in "Bony's" moral innocence had grown during the five years.

The trusty was not thinking of these things now. As he lay there, the first sunlight struggled through the dingy panes of the outside windows and silhouetted the bars of his cell door in gray outlines against the wall. It was another day.

"Eight hundred and twenty-seven," he muttered to himself. "Through the two thousand slowly moving days which one by one Time had gathered into her discard, the number remaining to the end of the seven and one-half years had been the trusty's first conscious thought each morning.

The compilation, with its alluring vista of freedom, once made, Burns' mind returned swiftly to the present and his prison environment. Though he wished for liberty with all the fervor of a long-termer, still, during the five years the great outside had grown unconsciously dim and far-away. Driving the team he saw the world, yet mingled not with it. The prison had become his home; here were his friends; here he maintained a position just as recognized as in the society of the free. Should he break the rules, commit the unforgivable crime of aiding a prisoner to escape? He about decided that he could not.

Then the boy moved again and, encouraged by the silence, stuck his tousled head out of his hiding place. It was a scared face, blue-eyed, freckled, surmounted by a shock of yellow hair. Not a bad face at all, not a whit different from those of thousands of sixteen-

year-old boys sleeping soundly in their beds that August morning.

"I didn't mean to do it, sir," John Evans whispered.

Burns knew that the guard, his count completed, was dozing in his chair on the other side of the ward. For ten minutes they were quite safe.

The trusty bent his head lower, so that his words fell almost noiselessly into the other's ears. "You can talk, kid—that is, real low."

"I didn't really try to get away," the hider-out stammered brokenly. "I've just been here a week and I got frightened. I was left behind when the line came down from the gallery two mornings ago. I saw officers standing around and was scared I'd get reported. So I hid in here. Say, do you think they'll do much to me?" he asked fearfully.

"Bony" gazed at the boy in amazement. The story was not credible. And yet as he looked at him, the trusty believed that the poor, frightened little fool spoke the truth.

"You tell me," he said slowly, "that you aint been out of the ward at all, just come down from the top gallery."

"Yes, sir," Evans mumbled again.

"The darned fool *fish,*" Burns muttered. For a fleeting second his mind reverted to the day when the Deputy Sheriff had pushed him through the front gate. Now, front gate and south gate and west gate alike opened at the sight of his sunburned face. He was trusty, trusty of the trusties, and it made his choice a hard one.

At that, Burns did not hesitate long. He knew what discovery meant to the shrinking form under the bed: long hours handcuffed to the post in the rotunda, days in solitary confinement, three months with ball and chain, stripes and third grade for a year. The unrealizing fugitive was such a boy! A year without yard, locked in his cell for the precious forty minutes during which the other prisoners for the nonce almost forgot the gray walls that encompassed them as they talked and played ball! All this a convict who had attempted to escape lost for a year. He was such a boy!

"I aint no bloodhound," Burns muttered. "They can't much more than take my job away from me."

Bending again over the bedside he addressed the hider-out in a low monotone.

"Where your folks live?" he asked.

"Chicago," the boy answered quickly.

"Did you tell the bull?" The trusty jerked his thumb toward the record-keeper's office.

"Nope." A gleam of cunning lit up the pale blue eyes. "I gave him the wrong dope."

"They aint had time to look you up and get your pedigree," Burns continued, with a dry smile. "You've learned early, kid."

By virtue of his position, Burns was in touch with all that happened in the institution. He knew that John Evans had committed a small burglary while spending the summer working in the state. Because he did not live in the commonwealth and lacked friends to arrange probation, the judge had sentenced him from a minimum of six months to the maximum, fifteen years, as fixed by statute—which would have been all well enough, if Evans had behaved himself and quietly taken his medicine. But now he had tried to escape, and the six months would inevitably lengthen to many years.

He was not a bad boy—only on the verge of becoming bad, just a criminal in the making.

"Got a mother, kid?" Burns asked sharply, his voice still low.

"Yes," the boy responded quickly, his eyes brightening.

"Want to go home?" the trusty asked.

"Do I? Oh, Lord, please!" All the cunning hardness of the street Arab died out of the boy's face. Once more he was just sixteen years old.

"Listen, kid: the screw will be here in a moment," the trusty said, hurrying his words as he heard the guard moving about. "Listen: I've got to talk fast. Go back under the bed and lie quiet. Then, when the lines go out, hustle into a pair of overalls and a faded-out shirt that you'll find on the shelf. Slip them on and get into the cot be-

tween the springs and the mattress. It wont be pleasant, but no matter. Lie still and leave the rest to me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," the boy murmured. "Oh, thank you, sir."

"Been eating my grahams?" the trusty asked, his eyes resting on the ledge that held his stock of provisions. "I thought they'd been going extra fast."

Evans nodded. Quick as a weasel he drew his head under the cot as his alert ear caught the shuffle of Kennedy's sneaks along the corridor. The brake that held the row of cells moved back with a protesting creak; then a key scraped in the lock.

"Good morning," the guard remarked. "Too bad you farmers want to sleep all day," he added, addressing "Bony" as the latter made no move to arise. "Now there aint another man in the ward but would jump right out if I turned the key upon him. You teamsters don't appreciate your privileges." The guard turned away.

"Perhaps I don't," Burns reflected grimly. "Kennedy would certainly think so if he knew about this deal." In silence he dressed himself, listening for any sound from under the bed. None came; the refugee was obeying instructions.

"The boy's game," Burns muttered. Fully dressed, he bent down and grasped the little hand in a swift pressure, then hurried into the corridor to join his three companions.

The actual details of the escape as Burns had planned them went through without mishap. The prison was on edge with a hider-out within its walls, but "Bony" was trusty, for five years without report or suspicion. He experienced no difficulty when at nine o'clock, refusing the hall boy's assistance, he carried his cot through the rotunda into the warm sunshine of the prison yard, placing it on the edge of the grass plot next to the drive. "I'll just let it soak there an hour or two," he explained.

While moving about in his cell, he had been able to whisper a dozen quick words to the refugee. Thus it was that when, an hour later, Burns drove his cart, loaded with the grass cuttings of the prison yard, slowly along the driveway, the boy agilely sprang within, burrowing deeply into the hay. As Burns had directed, Evans smuggled up against the footboard of the driver's seat, wedging his thin body against the boards. Without hesitation the trusty drove to the south gate.

Ordinarily, he would have passed through without comment, but a hider-out was still supposed to be within the walls, and the gate-keeper, with a muttered apology, twice sunk his pitchfork deep into the heaped up mass. Fortunate it was that Burns had prepared for the contingency.

"I guess you aint got nobody," the guard remarked, his grin expressing an opinion of the procedure. "It's orders, you understand, 'Bony.'"

The trusty smiled good-naturedly and drove on.

The town was three miles away, the road a lonely one. About half way, in the midst of a patch of woods, Burns climbed down from his seat and helped his passenger to the ground. The boy was weak from lack of food, but his face shone with the glow of the free.

"I've been saving my tips," "Bony" explained with a smile as he pressed three frayed five-dollar bills and some change into the small hand. "Now git—go back to your mother. I can't say whether you'd better stay or not," he continued, scratching his head in some perplexity, "but I don't believe the bulls will chase you very hard, when you're once out of the state."

With scarcely a word of thanks, Evans disappeared like a startled rabbit into the underbrush. His abrupt departure did not embitter Burns; he realized that the full measure of his sacrifice could not be understood by the boy.

During the five years of imprisonment "Bony" had slowly developed a sense of honor. He had been trusted and had taken pride in proving himself worthy. On occasions he had driven twenty miles from the prison on business connected with the farm, yet the idea of escape never had occurred to him. He was *trusty*.

Nor, though none knew better than "Bony" what awaited him, did he think of escape now. That morning the ir-

revocable decision had been taken; he had decided on his course. Now there was no dodging the facts. He was trusty and he had betrayed his trust. There was nothing more to be said. The only course open was to confess and receive his punishment.

"Bony" had entered the yard and was well on his way to the Deputy Warden's office, when, with the subtle sixth sense of communication that prison life engenders, he became aware that something new was astir. His fellows, as they passed him, did not speak, yet every face was alight.

"Betting on my successor already," Burns thought bitterly.

He was half way across the rotunda before he discovered the real meaning of this suppressed excitement. The Deputy Warden, his usually stern countenance softened with good humor, advanced from his office.

"You're pardoned, Burns," he almost shouted. "Not a parole, a pardon. You've been a free man since yesterday, though we only got the news this morning. I'm glad. You've earned it, 'Bony.'"

Impulsively he stretched forth his hand. Burns, stupefied, felt his fist engulfed in the pressure.

For many seconds, dazed and bewildered, the pardoned man stood motionless in the center of the rotunda. Should he confess? The question proved far too intricate for "Bony" to decide instantly.

"Pretty sudden, isn't it?" the Deputy continued with a smile. "You didn't know, I guess, that your friends on the outside were working for you. Now you better hurry over to the tailor shop and try on your clothes—you're due to go west on the one o'clock train," the Deputy added as he turned back to his office.

Almost oblivious of his friends, officers and prisoners, who pressed forward to shake his hand and tell him in simple, unaffected words that they were glad, Burns crossed the hundred yards to the tailor shop. Should he confess? The problem revolved in his mind. A moment before, when the weary hundreds of days confronted him, he had not hesitated. There had been no question about it then. He was trusty and he had betrayed his trust.

But now—unconsciously his shoulders straightened; Burns drew a long, sweet breath, a breath of freedom. Yesterday the Governor had pardoned him. He was free!

Yesterday! So the Deputy himself had said. All at once this solved the problem. The logic which "Bony" used may not have been very good, but it fully satisfied him.

That morning, when he had aided Evans to escape, he had not been a trusty violating his trust, but only a man—a free man—assisting a boy in distress. That he had broken a law in so doing meant nothing to Burns. Laws he had broken and might break again, but prison rules never—or without owning up.

"Bony" turned to the dozen prisoners, semi-trusties, who had escorted him, his broad face agleam as he stood at the foot of the tailor-shop stairs. "Boys," he said, "I thank you very much for your good wishes and I hope the same luck to all of you."

At three-thirty that afternoon the Deputy Warden sat on the edge of the Hallmaster's desk, watching the latter make up his count.

"There's no use keeping the guards on the wall to-night, Fred," he said finally. "I'm convinced that Evans is gone. We might as well enter him up as escaped."

"I don't see how the boy got away. Still, there's one thing about it, he isn't a very desperate man," the Hallmaster answered.

The Deputy's lips tightened. "That may be true," he said slowly, "but you know that doesn't make it any better for the reputation of the institution."

Then his face brightened and in the smile was the gleam of the real human kindness that made up the man. "I am very much pleased about Burns," he stated frankly.

The Hallmaster's pen slowly traced the figures on the count slip:

"Lost by escape—1; lost by pardon —1."

"Burns sure was a good man," he agreed.

The Outer Darkness

Are opportunities for heroism rare nowadays? It sometimes seems so. And yet—read this story and see if you don't think it describes the act of a real hero.

By GRANT OWEN

I HAD always liked Torrey Briggs. Even as a boy he had been one of those clean-cut, upright chaps with very clear views as to right and wrong and a sense of honor that bade fair to cause him no end of trouble in later life. If there were any music to be faced, Torrey Briggs was not the one to skulk in the background; he faced it with a resoluteness that won your heart. I am thinking particularly of a little episode of some Duchess D'Angelon pears of mine, in which Torrey figured when he was perhaps eight. I was very proud of my pears that year, and I was intending to send a plate of the Duchess D'Angelons to the Horticultural Society's autumn show. But of all the young urchins that raided the trees, Torrey Briggs was the only one who ever owned up.

I can see him now, standing first on one bare foot and then on the other, looking very crestfallen and very frightened as he told me of his part in the affair. Somehow I had never suspected him of being one of the marauders. I had put it down as the work of much older boys. He had come to me quite of his own accord. I remember it ended by my giving him a big basket of the pears which I had plucked before the night my trees were raided.

As I say, I had always liked him. And when he came back to our little town, a very distinguished man of thirty-eight, crowned with well-earned honors and with letters of several learned societies trailing his name, had he ever cared to put them there (which, by the way, he never did) I was very much pleased and very much flattered that he should strike up a great friendship with me and run over often to smoke a pipe with me and have a chat before the fire.

Torrey, it seemed, had been to the headwaters of the Amazon and there discovered the last remnants of a tribe of white Indians—those strange people about whom so much has been conjectured and so really little authentically known. He had lived among them for nearly a year and a half, and now he had come back to put his experiences into a book, for which, if I understood correctly, he had already received quite a fortune in advance royalties from his publishers.

It pleased me greatly that Torrey should single me out, as it were, for his particular crony while he tarried among us. I am an old man, crabbed, I am quite aware, set in my ways and very opinionated, as are most men who have lived a life like mine—that of a country prac-

titioner of medicine. I gave up my active practice when I was seventy, and that is already more years ago then I care to admit.

Torrey claimed he sought me out because he had never forgotten the basket of pears I handed him, together with the stiffest lecture on personal morals he had ever listened to in his life. Be that as it may, I know I liked his way of dropping in on me at almost any hour of the day or night; I liked his hearty laugh, his breezy talk; the way he had of referring to me as Father Hippocrates.

He was staying at the old Briggs place, where his two maiden sisters, both older than he, still lived. He thought he would be with us a matter of some two years at the shortest. The Briggs place is some little distance from my own, lying, as it does, on the outskirts of the town near the bank of the river. But Torrey had brought with him a high-powered road-car, in which he whisked here, there and everywhere, kicking up great clouds of dust and making the people of our staid little town shake their heads ominously. Speed isn't one of Renford's long suits.

I came to listen for the whirr of that car as it whirled up to the front gate, and the two vigorous yanks of the bell which always immediately followed its arrival. And then I'd fill my pipe and put a couple more logs on the hearth—for it was late autumn and already getting frosty—and Torrey and I would sit there toasting our shins and discussing everything under the sun, from the latest rise in the price of eggs to abstruse questions of ethics.

Mind, I realize perfectly that I am hide-bound and narrow and provincial in my views, and that the life I have led has of necessity made me decidedly opinionated. But for all that, I noticed that Torrey Briggs, way down in his heart, held the same views on many points that I did. For instance, we were quite agreed that the morals of the country at large were becoming deplorable. We lamented the increase of divorce, the unrest of modern woman, the loosening of the old ideals of family and family life. I found Torrey, for all those imposing letters he could have put after his name, quite as rigid and provincial (if that's the term for it) in some of his views as was I.

Therefore, when it came to me in a more or less roundabout way, whispered insidiously with the darkest construction possible upon it (as is the way in small towns like ours, if you'll notice), that Torrey was spending much time with Anne Phelps, the wife of the young moneyed man of our town, I thought it quite time to speak plainly to Torrey about it. I knew well enough that he and Anne Phelps had grown up together, that the Phelps' was the only house in town at all likely to appeal to Torrey, that Addison Phelps and his wife, being widely traveled and so far beyond the narrowness of our ken that gossip was forever busy with them, were the only people in town he would find at all congenial, that Torrey was passionately fond of music and Anne an excellent musician with a more than passable voice. To me the matter was perfectly clear, but I couldn't bear to think of Torrey's name mixed up in the cheap little gossip of the town; nor could I bear to think of Anne's name similarly misused.

Therefore when Torrey came booming along in his car at about five that afternoon, I went at the thing bluntly, as is my way.

"Torrey," said I, "you're too much at the Phelps place, particularly when Addison is not home. People are wagging their tongues."

"The devil they are!" said he, scowling into the fire. "Why, man, dear, Anne and I grew up together. She's like one of my sisters to me. I go there because she can talk and sing. It's awfully dead here, Father Hippocrates. Even you'll have to admit that."

"I know," said I, smiling my understanding and also my trust at him. "Still, Torrey, it isn't well to have these tongues busy with you and Anne, neither for your own sake nor for hers."

He laughed unpleasantly. "Blast their silly talk!" he burst out. "You've heard Anne sing Greig and Tosti, haven't you? Well, the idea of my missing that because of a lot of silly, gossip-mongering

old women! The idea!" he repeated thoughtfully. Then he hunched his shoulders and his jaws came together with a snap.

"I shall go there, of course," said he. "But I'll try to see the conventions are properly observed and the finer feelings of this delightful hamlet left intact by going there only when Addison is home. Well, how did that elderberry wine you were pressing the last time I was here come out, Father Hippocrates?"

By which I knew the matter was closed. I had no more thought of there being any grounds for the silly chatter than had Torrey at that moment; for I am fully convinced Torrey had no more thought of any wrong in it or ever coming of it than had I at that moment.

Therefore what was the shock to me one evening a month later when I heard the motor puff up to the gate and the bell ring, to find Torrey Briggs, white of face and very plainly much distraught, standing there on the step.

We were having a full moon at the time. It was almost as light as day without. Therefore I could see his face plainly, and the droop of his big shoulders, and that the car was thick with mud as if it had been driven very far and very hard.

The hand he gave me, with the gauntlet pulled off, was cold and clammy. I thought at first he was sick.

"Ha!" said I. "Maybe I haven't practiced since I was seventy, but I've practiced enough before that to know a sick man when I see one."

"Do you know a sick soul when you see it?" he muttered, and something in the tone made me catch my breath.

I stared at him. He marched into the study, plumped down in a chair before the fire and kicked at the snapping embers with the toe of one big shoe.

"I'm going away," said he.

"Ah, the town's got on your nerves, has it? I've been looking for something like this. It takes a peculiar temperament to content itself for long in one of these dead little towns," said I.

He looked at me sharply.

"Yes," he said dully, "you're quite right."

"Whither away this time?" I asked lightly. "The Amazon again?"

Again that searching look of his flashed at me. He set his lips.

"What's the use of all this pretense?" he snapped. "Can't you guess?"

I shook my head. I was honestly mystified for the moment.

"Hang it!" he burst out. "You're a wise old man, a keen old man. You'll find it out sooner or later. You'll begin to surmise and put two and two together and you'll get the correct 'four' for the answer. Besides, I like you. You've been like another father to me. I had better tell somebody. Confession is good for the soul and—and for the heart," he ended brokenly.

I must have started, for he smiled grimly as he looked at me.

"I told you you'd guess," said he.

"No!" I cried in horror.

"Yes!" he said, and at that moment there wasn't half the sorrow in his tones I could have wished; just a great, overweening joy. His eyes were flashing, but the light died suddenly from them. He nervously snapped open his cigarette-case, lighted one and puffed furiously.

"There's generally basis for gossip after all, Father Hippocrates—isn't there?" he said, and he was speaking with infinite sadness now. Also his head was drooped on his big chest. "The wisdom of the multitude is more apt to be correct than the puny wisdom of the individual. Listen! I haven't been there since except when Addison was there too, until to-night. I thought he would be there to-night or I'd never have gone. I don't know what it was; something was different. Maybe it was because I'd made it a point to go there only when Addison was there. Anyway, there was constraint at first. We both felt it. We were ill at ease. I was coming right away, but she asked me if she couldn't sing to me. There were candles on the piano—candles with little rose-colored shades; and there was a fire on the hearth, and she was very, very lovely. I shouldn't have stayed . . . Lord!"

He stopped. He tried to strike a match for the cigarette; his hand was trembling. At last he threw the match, unlighted, into the fire, and the half-burned cigarette after it.

"Blast their gossiping tongues!" he cried out. "I hadn't been there except

when Addison was there, and we both felt it, and the fire, too, and the candles with the little rose-colored shades! She sang for me. Her voice is always beautiful but never was it so wonderful as to-night. She sang at last that little thing of Tosti's—you know the one. It goes like this:"

I didn't know that particular one, but that was a small matter. He sang it softly in his deep barytone. The perspiration was standing on his forehead, although the fire had died low.

"I shouldn't have stayed," he continued. "I was turning the music for her. The light from those cursed little rose-colored shades touched her hair. She looked up at me. She was lovely, Father Hippocrates, the loveliest thing on earth or heaven, I tell you. I lost my head. I don't know just what happened. I must have kissed her. Then she was leaning weakly against the piano. She was crying, but behind her tears her eyes were setting my blood on fire. She said: 'God help us—both!'

"I came away. Yes, look at me like that. I deserve it. I know what I am. I'm going from here, just as soon as I can get things fixed—business things for the girls at the house. I'm going to-morrow or the end of the week at the latest. Good-by! I'm glad I've told you."

He jumped out of the chair like a nervous woman and strode to the door. He didn't offer me his hand, but I took it and pressed it warmly none the less.

He jumped into the car. I heard him tearing down the muddy road at a furious pace. I fell to wondering how much he knew. There were certain things about Addison Phelps I knew. They were not gossip; had they been, the town would have blazed and seethed with them. They had come to me never mind how. They were things I was sure even Anne Phelps did not know nor suspect. I was wondering if Torrey Briggs knew them. If he did not, I hoped he wouldn't know of them before he left. That would make a pretty mess.

I am just old fashioned enough to hate things savoring of the eternal triangle; I despise the bread eaten in secret, which is spoken of in the ninth chapter of Proverbs; I am, too, a great believer in the "Whom-God-has-joined-together-let-no-man-put-asunder" proposition, even at great sacrifice on one side of the house or the other.

Wherefore, in light of his recent confession, and the things I knew about Addison Phelps, I wished to see Torrey Briggs well away on the headwaters of the Amazon.

That, if I remember rightly, was one Tuesday night. On the following Friday night—it must have been after ten, because I had lighted my candle preparatory to going up to bed—Torrey's motor whizzed up to the gate and the bell banged twice.

I opened the front door. It was an overcast night, dark and warm for that time of year and threatening rain.

"I've come over to tell you I'm not going away," said Torrey, stepping in. "It wont be necessary."

Then in the light streaming out from the study, I saw a plastered cut on his left cheek, and marring scratches on his forehead. Also he limped painfully as he walked.

"I was in a smash to-night," he explained. "First one I've ever had. That isn't my car at the gate. It's one I rented to get home in."

I started to speak but he held up his hand and hurried on.

"It was down at the turn at the foot of Round Hill. I wasn't going very fast. The road was too slippery. But I heard a car coming from the other way, and it was certainly taking chances. I could hear a good deal of singing and loud laughing as they neared the turn. I know what that means generally. I pulled well out to the right and honked the horn for all I was worth. There was a flash of their lights as they caught the curve. They skidded into me. They were going at a foolhardy clip. There was an awful smash. I hit the road and when I managed to scramble up I saw a man and two girls picking themselves up from the roadside. Another man was slinking off down the road. He wasn't taking any chances. He wasn't even waiting to see if they were badly hurt.

"I ran over to one of the girls. She was a sorry, painted little creature. She was dazed—not wholly by the accident,

either. I got a good whiff of her breath. The man was helping up the other girl, talking in maudlin fashion to her. It was Addison Phelps.

He paused and all my pent-up wrath burst out.

"So that's why you're not going away, eh?" I snarled. "You'll stay right here until the whole business is out, I suppose. You'll perhaps even help Anne to get her divorce. Then, of course, you'll marry her. I see."

Torrey smiled at me, patiently.

"Wait," said he. "Let me finish. Perhaps you'll remember I said this happened at the foot of Round Hill, not a stone's throw from the village. In a trice lights were moving towards us. Addison saw them coming. It seemed to sober him. There was blood streaming down his face from an ugly cut on his forehead. Neither of the girls were seriously hurt.

"The lights came closer. We could hear voices. Addison dropped the arm of the girl he was steadying and ran over to me.

"'My God!' he hissed in my ear. 'This'll about end me if it ever gets out. Anne's high-minded. She wouldn't stand for anything like this. That crowd will be here in a minute. Say these girls are with you, Torrey—for God's sake say they are with you!"

"I looked at the girls; one of them was that Barlow girl from Millville and the other was Mrs. Jimmy Culver. I don't think I need say more.

"You can imagine, perhaps, what it all meant to me at first. I wanted to shout; here was the way to Anne wide open. What more could I have asked? Then Addison began to plead harder. I thought of all the things we'd talked over, you and I, here in this room at odd times. Was it Anne's happiness or my own I was considering most? And after all, Anne was Addison's wife, and Anne, if I were to believe him, suspected nothing.

"The lights were close to us now. Half the town came running up, it seemed. I pushed Addison away.

"'All right,' I said. 'They're with me.'

"So there'll be no need of my going away, Father Hippocrates. It'll be bandied around everywheres in the morning, rest assured—that I was in a smash-up to-night and that I had with me the Barlow girl and the notorious Mrs. Culver. Anne will hear it, and Anne, as Addison says, is high-minded. I shall be cast into the outer darkness so far as Anne is concerned—the outer darkness where I properly belong."

I stepped over to his chair and laid my hand on his shoulder. Something was tightening my throat strangely.

"My boy," I said, "I might have known."

But I do not think he heard me. He was staring into the embers of the fire, and although his face was all twisted as if with pain, he was smiling—a queer, warped smile of satisfaction.

"FREE LANCES IN DIPLOMACY"

ONE of the finest of Clarence Herbert New's "Adventures of a Diplomatic Free Lance" will appear in next month's BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. Owing to certain unfortunate complications, "The Education of Hassan Ali" arrived too late for publication in this issue, and we were forced to postpone it until March. There is to be no break in the series, however. Indeed, Mr. New has material for a group of tales even more fascinating than those already published. Don't fail to get your March magazine early; it will be on the stands February 1st.

The Red Secret

A complete novelette detailing the curious circumstances which caused a Vermont girl named Tillie to turn detective, and how she solved the mystery of the Northurlund murder and the riddle of the Maharajah's rubies.

By STANLEY SHAW

IT was the opening night of the Metropolitan Opera season; Farrar, Caruso and Scotti were to sing; and a brilliant audience of the social elect had begun to assemble.

The second grand tier stage box was to be occupied on this evening by Mrs. Embleton Northurlund, a popular member of the highest social set, a woman freely acknowledged to be one of the most beautiful in the United States, and a person of thoroughly delightful personality.

At eight o'clock on each yearly opening opera evening, the question on the mind of every auditor in the vast amphitheatre was: "What will Mrs. Embleton Northurlund wear to-night?" And each season she had delighted them with the view of a costume more artistic, brilliant and beautiful than the season before.

On this opening night of "Maritza," Constance Northurlund entered her box at the Metropolitan at thirteen minutes after eight, and the gasp of astonishment that emanated from that packed theatre was like one single, gigantic, astonished outbreathing of air as the eyes of the entire audience, and a thousand lorgnettes, were focused on her form.

Her costume was simplicity itself, merely a gracefully draped, clinging covering of palest green that displayed the olive sheen of arms and shoulders to perfection. But her jewels! It was those which produced that mingled gasp of astonishment and admiration.

They were rubies, and seldom, if ever, had such a glorious wealth of rubies been seen before. Like dripping drops of blood they fell from her corsage, trembled in her hair, encircled her arms in strings of pulsating crimson, clung with the glory of a regal sunset to her throat.

In a city like New York, however, no display of jewels, however rare or beautiful, would have of itself attracted great attention. But rubies—a collection of rubies like this—instantly brought to everyone's mind a remarkable mystery that a few months before had excited the city and had for long held a place even in the crowded columns of Gotham's dailies, for when, late the preceding summer, the Maharaja of Kaphortana, who is known as "The Ruler of the Rubies," had come to this country to visit his son, who was being educated at Harvard, he had brought with him an immense fortune in gems, all

genuine pigeon-blood rubies, perfectly cut and magnificently mounted with that wealth of wild imagery possessed by cunning Indian artisans who execute each piece entirely by hand and make it a creation of their very souls.

As the Maharaja frequently wore his surpassing collection of rubies when attending the many brilliant social functions arranged in his honor, public interest was keen when it became known one morning that the Maharaja's secretary, an educated native, had been found strangled with the cord of his own bathrobe in his bed at the Plazara Hotel, and that the Maharaja's entire collection of rubies had been stolen.

A peculiar feature that added to the mystery of this matter was that the ruby thief, after strangling his victim, had cut out and carried away the secretary's heart. Why should the rascal thus add to his chances of detection by such a senseless proceeding, was the universal query; surely not to make certain of death, because the surgeons testified at the coroner's inquest that the secretary undoubtedly died of strangulation several minutes before the breast was cut into. In the several months that followed this crime no trace was discovered of the missing rubies, no clue to the strangler.

It is difficult to think of the most beautiful woman in America, a favored leader of the highest social set, as being mixed up with murder and robbery, yet hundreds who gazed that evening on the rubies of Constance Northurlund remembered that it was she who had entertained the Maharaja of Kaphortana the very evening his gems were stolen—remembered her extravagant admiration of their surpassing beauty as the flattered prince detailed the history of each jewel for her benefit, and that the Plazara Hotel was owned by Embleton Northurlund.

It is quite as difficult to mention her gems to a woman of such perfect mental and social poise as was Mrs. Embleton Northurlund, especially when one suspects her of having come by them in some manner clandestine; yet that simpering Madge Cymblevane did pluck up sufficient courage to whisper in Mrs. Northurlund's ear:

"It is the most wonderfully beautiful costume you ever wore, Constance; but where on earth did you secure such magnificent rubies?"

Madge Cymblevane drew her pretty head back as if expecting the answer might be sharp and stinging—an entirely unfounded suspicion, since Constance merely gave a pleased laugh as she answered in her deep contralto tones:

"Oh, I do love them so; but it is a great secret where they came from. I shall never breathe a syllable of it to any living mortal."

II

DETECTIVE TOM BLACK

It is not possible, on mere unfounded suspicion, to take drastic criminal action against a favored society woman of unblemished reputation and the highest standing, even though it may seem that she has come into mysterious possession of rubies worth a prince's ransom, and though one does suspect that the transfer of those same rubies involved a murder. Yet gossip became so insistent in regard to Constance Northurlund's rubies that Second Deputy Commissioner Connolly, head of New York's plain clothes force, was pointedly informed by the mayor, who had been prodded by the State Department at Washington, that something must be done. "Rumors should be silenced," read Connolly's instructions, "or the truth disclosed; but positively without arousing scandal unless you have a very clear case."

Connolly, therefore, after receiving his orders from the mayor, summoned one of the cleverest men in his department, Thomas Black, into his private office to find out how matters were progressing. Thomas Black was a wiry, smooth-faced little fellow, seemingly devoid of feeling, who appeared even smaller in size by contrast with Connolly, a person who might have been taken for a liberally enlarged edition of ex-President Roosevelt.

"That case of the Maharaja's rubies," snapped Connolly briskly. "Just what do we know about it, Tom, as far as the Northurlund's are concerned?"

Black, who spoke a half dozen different languages and handled many of the foreign cases, pulled a note book filled with apparently unmeaning hieroglyphics from his pocket and began his report:

"I've made a careful canvass of every jeweler in New York; neither Embleton Northurlund, or any member of his household, has bought such a thing as a ruby within the last two years. I did not think it necessary to have the sales record examined previous to then. I did find, however, that Embleton Northurlund and his wife spent six months in India, two years ago, as the guest of the Viceroy, and that both have mixed much in matters esoteric, dabbled in theosophy, and the like. Mrs. Embleton Northurlund has learned to speak both Hindustani and Maharatta; they brought back from India two native servants who are still with them, one as an *ayah*, the other as valet to Mr. Northurlund. While there has never been the faintest breath of scandal against Mrs. Northurlund, the fact of her possessing these remarkable rubies, taken in connection with what I have mentioned, appears rather suspicious, doesn't it?"

"Seems impossible!" burst from the lips of Connolly. "That little chap Northurlund is the soul of honor, a profound student, a leader in civic improvements; he's not much to look at, but just the same he's one of the best liked millionaires in New York. I know his home life to be ideal, and he fairly worships his wife; their public and private charities amount to many thousand dollars yearly. Black, it appears to me unthinkable that those two people can have any direct connection with this murder and robbery; but His Honor and the State Department at Washington say *dig*, and we must do it."

The little detective, who dearly loved the dramatic, had held back his trump cards until the last. "I have also found," continued he, "that Mr. Northurlund, six weeks ago, carried twelve hundred and ninety-seven unset rubies to Callon, an obscure manufacturing jeweler in Maiden Lane, and engaged him to mount them in the identical settings worn by Mrs. Northurlund at the opening night of the opera season. In ordering this work done Northurlund made it an express stipulation that the entire job should be personally attended to by Callon and that he should not mention the matter to anyone."

"That looks strange, to say the least," commented Connolly. "Are you certain of your facts?"

"I have the particulars from Callon himself, who is under personal obligations to me on account of those diamonds I recovered for him. Unfortunately, however, Callon can give but a memory description of the rubies brought to him by Northurlund. The Maharaja's gems were roughly valued, when he declared them, at fifty lacs of rupees, but, if we can put any confidence in Callon's memory estimate, the rubies brought to him for mounting by Northurlund were worth nearly double that."

"Man's bug," burst from the Second Deputy Commissioner's lips. "That would amount to five million dollars. Nobody *ever* owned rubies of that worth. Is this Callon a fellow you can rely on?"

"He is," answered Black, "but, you must remember, he qualifies both his description and valuation by saying that it is not a matter of record, but of memory; besides, he does not pretend to be an expert on ruby valuations."

"Another fact which bears upon this case," continued Black, laying a rather dirty sheet of paper before his chief, "is this letter, which came in my mail this morning."

Connolly, after considerable study, made out the contents of the note to be as follows:

Honored Sir:
Ramchutta Sundey very good India servant boy christian educate salvation. What say about rubies. Went hotel American kill secretary, which my humble self try prevent. To know do how come see. Servant shef.
Ramchutta Sundey.
Very fine chutney, curries with also sauces.

"What a mince pie of words," declared Connolly as he dropped the greasy sheet of paper on the table. "It

seems to be the characteristic English efforts of a half-educated Hindoo; but what does it mean?"

"As I interpret it," answered the linguistic Black, "the note is from a missionary educated East Indian native; the fact of those grease stains indicates he is not a Hindoo. He is attempting to communicate the idea that an American, as he expresses it, went to the hotel and murdered the secretary having the rubies and that he, in some way, saw this crime committed."

"And you take this 'American' to point to one of the Northurlunds?" asked the Commissioner, still extremely reluctant to believe that either Mr. or Mrs. Northurlund could have had anything to do with the robbery of the Maharaja's rubies.

"Points that way," answered Black, "more especially after what Callon has told me."

"What have you done toward discovering the source of this note?" inquired Connolly. "Is there any such person as 'Ramchutta Sundey' employed in the Northurlund household?"

"There is not. I have been unable to locate a native Indian servant of that name anywhere in New York, as yet. That is all of importance that I can report now regarding the ruby robbery. You may rest assured, however, Commissioner, that the thing will break out soon. I feel it in my bones."

"Perhaps, perhaps," put in Connolly, with rather a rueful sigh; "anyway, you'd better keep at it; but make no definite move toward an arrest without first consulting me—remember that."

III

INTRODUCING MISS MATILDA MYERS

THE household, on upper Fifth Avenue, of Embleton Northurlund, multimillionaire, was maintained on an elaborate scale, with a multiplicity of servants. The head of this force was one Wattleson, an English butler and general major-domo of stiff neck, austere mien, a dignity that fell before nothing and a loyalty to his mistress that was deeply ingrained in his nature.

Proceeding down the scale of servitude from Wattleson, the lowest and latest encumbent in the Northurlund household was Miss Matilda Myers. Tilly Myers was somewhere around eighteen years old, and a washer of windows. Since there were something over one hundred windows in the Northurlund home on upper Fifth Avenue she found her duties far from light: yet she was in no degree discouraged by this fact, being possessed of a buoyant nature and a physique equal to almost any ordinary task that might come her way.

Matilda Myers was a product of the farm and the Green Mountain regions of Vermont, having been brought down by Mrs. Northurlund from "Allenhurst," her country home in that state. She was short, rather raw boned and as aggressively healthy as good farm raising could make her. Matilda possessed a crop of freckles that caused her face to appear rather like a generously sprinkled and rosy current cake. Her hair was rebellious and red, fiery red, yet Tilly Myers, properly dressed under the hands of a skillful ladies' maid might have appeared a long way short of an ugly girl—the basic material was there for true beauty.

Matilda's dominating passion was a love for the literary effusions of an individual whom she invariably alluded to as "Old Slouch," and she customarily went about her duties with a pail of soapy water in one hand, a collection of window rags in the other and a paper-bound nickel novel by her favorite "Old Slouch" concealed in the bosom of her dress—to be surreptitiously drawn forth and perused with feverish interest whenever opportunity occurred.

At certain times in the day Tilly might have been observed by the passers hanging outside a window, figuratively speaking, by one eyelash, with a poised rag in one hand and the paper-bound novel in the other, dead to all things on earth save the difficulties through which her beloved hero was passing while extricating himself from the newest corner into which his creator had relentlessly driven him. One great desire of Tilly Myers' life was some day to meet a real, sure-enough

detective; her fondest dream of all was to be a detective herself.

"Wouldn't it be gorgeous," declared Tilly. "Me to stand with my trusty revolver held negligently in my girlish hand and say: 'Hold up your hands for the darbies, Daredevil Dan the smuggler. At last I have you where I want you and before to-morrow's sun has sunk you shall be started on your trip up the river to Sing Sing.'" From which it may be gathered that Matilda's idea of a detective's life and duties was somewhat hectic.

On this particular morning Matilda was being instructed by Wattleson in regard to washing the windows of the billiard room on the top floor of the Northurlund home.

"Now be most careful, Myers," said Wattleson when imparting his instructions. "You are to cleanse the billiard room windows honly; the next room is the marster's private study, and no member of the 'ousehold is ever allowed to go near there hat hany time whatever. Mr. Northurlund may pass through the billiard room on his way to the study while you are hengaged in your duties, but he never plays billiards in the morning, so you may keep right on with your work. Do you understand fully, Myers?"

"Yezzir, the billiard room windows is wanted scrubbed," answered Tilly, who, while Wattleson talked to her, had been eyeing him with half shut lids as she thought: "I wonder if he has a ter'ble secret gnawing at his vitals? He certainly looks powerful solemncholy; as if something was a-eatin' of him."

"No, no, Myers," corrected Wattleson with dignity. "They are to be 'cleansed;' you should try dutifully to correct that low 'abit of language you brought from your 'ome. Now please pay hattention more carefully." And the butler repeated his precise instructions.

"Low language, the idea!" sniffed Tilly to herself as she proceeded to her duties. "An' he droppin' his haiches like rain on a tin roof. It aint the 'eavy 'auling that 'urts the 'osses 'oofs, Mr. Wattleson; it's the 'ammer, 'ammer, 'ammer on the 'ard 'ighway. Mebbe he can buttle all right, but he aint no school-teacher at talkin'."

There were a half-dozen dormer windows in the billiard room and Tilly found her duties in cleansing them rather difficult, since they were uncommonly high and narrow. Having finished the inside of one window with comparative ease, she attempted the outside, and then her difficulties began; when the upper sash was down she could reach outside only far enough to cleanse half of it; when the lower sash was up, she could reach but half of that, leaving a portion of each sash begrimed in spite of all she could do. The only possible solution of the matter seemed to be to crawl outside on the sloping roof and complete the undertaking from there. This was a somewhat ticklish matter; but Tilly did finally crawl out and make a fairly presentable job of the outside work on one window.

While Tilly was thus engaged outside on the roof Mr. Northurlund passed through the billiard room and entered his private study, paying no attention to the servant engaged on the window work.

Having completed the outside of one window, Tilly decided that it would be a time-saving plan to crawl along the gently sloping roof and cleanse the outside of all the windows of the billiard room before going back to the interior work.

Tilly had thus washed several windows in this manner when she happened to notice that the window on which she was engaged had a form of iron grill work on the inside. Peering in, Tilly discovered that she was not working on a billiard room window at all, but upon one that gave into the private study of Mr. Northurlund, a fact of which she was certain, since she could plainly see the little man himself, seated inside at a table with his back to the window.

Upon giving a second glance inside Tilly nearly lost her balance on the roof with excitement.

"Well, I'll be switched!" thought Tilly.

Mr. Northurlund appeared to Tilly to be holding up one arm above the

table while the blood streamed from his hand in a perfect torrent. A second glance, however, assured her that it was not blood dropping from his hands, but great fistfuls of red gems which he was constantly lifting into the air from a pile before him and permitting to drop back again in a stream of crimson as he watched the play of glowing color that flashed among the falling stones.

"Oh, look at the jewels!" muttered Tilly in amazement. "Aint them gorgeous, an' he's a-playin' with 'm as if they weren't worth no more'n so much sand. I bet if some folks knew them jewels were there his life wouldn't be worth a pinch of my ole Granny Myers' snuff."

So intent was the servant's gaze as she peered through the windows that she failed to note the slow and careful opening of Northurlund's study door; neither did she see a form that came quickly inside and as quickly and softly closed the door again.

The person entering the room was dressed in dark brown, tight fitting garments; the face itself appeared dark, and only the purple hair offered contrast in a color ensemble that so closely matched the mahogany of the study woodwork and furniture as to render the human form well nigh invisible as it half crawled along on the heavy carpet toward the unsuspecting man idly playing with the great heap of gems.

It was the glitter of light on polished steel that first caught Tilly's eyes, and, for a brief moment, it was all she saw. It was this same brief lapse on her part that cost Northurlund his life; for, had Tilly observed the brown form earlier, she might have given warning and averted the swift descent of that long, keen blade that sank between the shoulders of Mr. Northurlund as he bent above the gems.

With a faint gasp Northurlund fell limp across the heap of jewels. Then he was pushed roughly to one side as the murderer began to scoop up the gems, tossing them into a brown bag carried beneath one arm and doing all this with but an indifferent glance toward Tilly, who had broken the glass of one window with her washing mop and who now rattled furiously at the light iron grill, endeavoring to gain an entrance to the study.

The iron work refused to give way at the scrub girl's efforts. In desperation she finally drew back one substantial foot and kicked so effectively that the grill shot inward with Tilly after it, both coming to the floor with a crash that ought to have aroused the entire household had not the study been the sound-proof apartment it was.

Half dazed, Tilly had scarcely time to regain her senses when she saw the brown form drop the bag of jewels and dart her way with the long, gleaming knife upraised to strike again.

Matilda Myers, the little scrub girl, knew she faced death; but she was no coward; the sense of fear in connection with anything living was entirely absent from her nature. Rising to her knees she spread both arms wide and met the oncoming form like a female grizzly bear. So quick were these motions that Tilly's hug caught the murderer before the knife-carrying hand had a chance to descend.

Thus they struggled, the muscular scrub girl with both arms wrapped about the shoulders of the brown clothed murderer, her sharp nails digging into the flesh, while her opponent squirmed and twisted in a vain endeavor to bring down the knife.

Tilly had not only secured the grasp of a female grizzly bear on her murderous opponent, but she possessed nearly the strength of one. She realized that her only advantage consisted in digging those nails of hers deeper and deeper, and in hugging tighter and tighter, a proceeding she would have carried to success had she not made a sudden and unexpected discovery. Unaware of the sound proof qualities of Northurlund's study, Tilly was screaming for help and drawing her arms closer and closer when she suddenly heard the clothing rip in her hands, looked down and cried:

"Well, I'll be switched! It's a woman —a woman dressed in man's clothes!"

This discovery so astonished Tilly that, for a brief instant, she relaxed her hold, an advantage that did not

escape the attention of her antagonist, who saw the chance and brought her keen knife down above the shoulder blade of Matilda Myers, relentlessly pressing it home until the point emerged beneath Tilly's scapula.

Tilly sank limply back with open mouth and a most amazed expression on her face as she gave vent to the long drawn out expression: "Gos-s-h-h." Poor Tilly, things were rather different from fiction when it came to reality.

Withdrawing the knife the brown clothed woman again took up the bag of rubies, grasped the lifeless body of Northurlund, swung that across her supple shoulders and left the study, permitting the lock on the door to snap shut, and giving but one scornful glance behind her at the courageous little scrub girl, whose freckled face appeared like a formless gob of painter's putty dotted with dead flies as she lay with open mouth on the blood-spattered rug.

IV

DETECTIVE BLACK AT WORK

At eight o'clock in the evening, on the same day that Matilda Myers had found the task of washing windows in the Fifth Avenue home of Embleton Northurlund so eventful an undertaking, Detective Black sat alone in a room of his home on Twelfth Street.

One side of this room was taken up with a long, low shelf littered with test tubes, filter bottles, a high power microscope and a sink; four feet above this was another shelf filled with numbered and lettered dust proof boxes containing double sheets of glass on which were thousands of finger print impressions. These were not official records; those were in the fireproof storage vaults at police headquarters; this was merely a collection of widely varying specimens over which the studious detective loved to pore at odd moments.

The opposite side of detective Black's sanctum was given over to a large desk and a long table, the latter piled high with books, a drawing board, T square and a set of instruments for making exact drawings.

The books on this table were scarcely those one would expect to find in the home of a headquarters detective, being largely devoted to the many aspects of the social revolt, and including such authors as Karl Marx, Tolstoi, George, and the like. It was the delight of the little man, in his leisure hours, to browse among the thoughts of these revolutionary minds.

The desk was close to the door. An electric bunch light with three globes hung above the desk, sending a flood of bright light beating down on the little drab detective and dwarfing his form into even smaller comparison with the desk than it naturally held. At first glance all one saw was what looked to be an abnormally large head propelled about in some mysterious, unseen manner among the desk litter.

Black was intently studying that cryptogramic note book of his when his telephone bell began to jangle. He picked up the instrument, absently holding it to his ear without taking his eyes from the note book over which he had been poring.

As the second complete telephone sentence reached his ears Black dropped all appearance of abstraction and gave his entire attention to the words that were buzzing into his listening ear.

"Hello, Black!" said the voice in the 'phone. "This is Connolly talking. Embleton Northurlund has just been discovered murdered in his bath. The coroner has not yet been notified and the family desires me to send up a man to quietly look things over before he comes. Coroner Antonelli will be the man called and you know how that old fat-head messes up matters and creates publicity. I want you to go at once to the Northurlund house and canvass the situation before he gets there. Wattleson, the butler, has been instructed to show you about; but do not disturb anything or make any move that might antagonize Antonelli or even make him aware of the fact that you have been there. Also bear carefully in mind what I said regarding the ruby case; the Northurlunds are people of the highest standing and most powerful influence; we must proceed with extreme caution."

The distance from Twelfth Street to Fifth Avenue and Sixty-eighth Street is not a long one, yet Thomas Black entertained many strange thoughts as he rode there in a taxicab.

The evening was close and unseasonable; fitful flashes of lightning and deep rumbles of thunder came from over toward the Palisades, presaging a coming storm. Black felt the dispiriting effect of the night, yet his mind moved keenly enough at this new development in the case of the Maharaja's rubies.

The detective had previously centered his suspicions on Embleton Northurlund. The Maharaja had lost his jewels in Northurlund's hotel after visiting the Northurlund home. Then Northurlund had carried a fortune in rubies to a jeweler to be set. Northurlund was also known to worship his wife with the ardor of a young lover, to gratify her every wish. Would this worship hesitate at robbery, perhaps murder? Then, too, there was the matter of the note, plainly directing suspicion toward an American, that the detective received in his mail. Given all these facts and the socialistic mind of a man like Black, could suspicion need stronger evidence against a millionaire? Yet here was a development that almost wrecked the carefully filled in case of the little detective: Northurlund himself found murdered!

Yet, in a way, as he studied the thing, it seemed to simplify matters. Before this new development Tom Black had laid the crime of the Maharaja's rubies at Northurlund's door with his wife as a willing accomplice; now Black could narrow the whole thing down to a single person, the wife, and he went to Northurlund's house fully expecting to find evidence to that effect.

Upon arriving at the Northurlund's home Black was met at the door by Wattleson, the butler, conducted to the elevator and thence to the large bathroom where the murder had first been discovered.

"The body was found at thirty minutes after seven, sir," said Wattleson as they proceeded upward in the elevator. "I passed to the marster's chamber, where I supposed 'im to be dressing, to hinform 'im that the dinner hour was nigh. Not finding Mr. Northurlund in 'is chamber, and thinking it rather strange, as 'e is halways dressed at that hour, I knocked upon his large bathroom door. Getting no response I hopened it a crack, sir, and then, at what I saw, beggin' your pardon for the contretemps, sir, but I think I must 'ave fainted; first time it hever occurred in my life, I assure you. Anyway, when I came to myself the mistress was standing hover me, screaming."

"Had Northurlund no valet?" asked Black.

"Oh, yes, 'e 'as a native man who attends to 'is personal wants, but I believe the chap is out for the day. 'E is not what we call extra popular in the 'ouse'old and 'is goings and comings are not paid particular attention to; but I believe Mr. Northurlund's man was out for the day—in fact, the marster so hinformed me this morning when I saw him last halive."

"The bathroom door was not locked when you found the body?" inquired Black as he peered about.

"It was not, sir," answered Wattleson.

"Would it be possible for any outside stranger to enter the house or pass about this floor without being detected?"

"Positively himpossible, I assure you, sir," declared the butler in an aggrieved tone.

The bathroom was sumptuously fitted up in Pompeiian fashion, with a huge sunken plunge, and it was in this pool that the lifeless form of Northurlund had been discovered. The dead man now lay on the inlaid marble beside the pool where the family physician had recently been engaged in examining the body. The physician, a snowy haired man with close cropped beard, spectacles, and a grave air of great concern, stood beside the corpse gazing down on the calm, almost smiling face of Northurlund as Black entered. This elderly man was Dr. Floyd Weston, one of the most famous surgeons in New York.

With a nod of greeting toward the surgeon, Black took in every detail of the finely appointed bathroom. It was

spotlessly clean and, aside from a pool of blood-tinged water in the plunge and the white form lying upon the marble inlay floor, might have been taken for the asceptic operating room of a well ordered hospital, so bare was it of trace of the terrible crime. There were no signs of a struggle, no bloody hand-prints; the towels upon the silver rod were in perfect order; even the heavy silk bath mat beside the plunge failed to show a spot of blood.

There was absolutely nothing out of the ordinary in this bathroom for Detective Black to note, save the dead man. Absolutely nothing.

V

THE BODY IN THE BATH

After stepping gingerly about the plunge in which the body of Embleton Northurlund had been found, Detective Black came back to the stark form itself beside which Dr. Floyd Weston was standing. "What do you make of it, Doctor?" he asked.

Dr. Floyd Weston, a deliberate, slow-spoken man, had a voice of soft timbre that would alone have made him famous as a bedside counselor, even had he not possessed a marvelous technique in surgical work.

"Very odd case, Officer," answered the doctor, as he balanced his glasses on one finger, closed one eye and gazed reflectively down on the naked torso. "A perfectly clean incision was made immediately above the heart—I could not have used better judgment myself—an incision exactly six and one-eighth inches in length. Into this perfect incision went a human hand; the lung casing was lifted to one side and the heart literally torn from its position. Why *torn* I cannot imagine, for the person who did this thing was scarcely an amateur at using the knife," went on the surgeon in his soft voice as he balanced himself first on his heels, then on his toes, and gazed down at the body of Northurlund as if mentally dissecting it for the exact location of every nerve and artery, "but torn out it certainly was, and carried away."

"Was the incision over the heart responsible for Northurlund's death?" inquired Black.

"No. Death came from a stab wound from the rear. Entering between the shoulder blades, avoiding the spine and ribs, the knife of the murderer came out on the left side between the seventh and eighth ribs, after penetrating the left ventricle and causing instant death with profuse hemorrhage. There is no water in the lungs."

"Was the crime committed, in your opinion, while Northurlund was in the bath?" asked Black.

"Difficult to determine," replied the doctor, carefully weighing the question and his spectacles at the same time. "I should judge that the operation upon the heart, at least, was performed while Embleton was lying in his bath, which accounts for the utter absence of stains."

"I see, I see. And what sort of a knife made the death wound?" put in Black, who had listened very intently to these last remarks.

"The death wound, received from the back and passing through the heart, was made by a knife at least fifteen inches in length; between one and one-half and two inches wide at the hilt and tapering to a point. It was a very thin blade, yet not a flexible one."

"Would you recognize this instrument if you saw it?" inquired Black.

"Undoubtedly," answered the surgeon. "I should judge it to be of rather uncommon shape."

"Um-'m," muttered Black half to himself, as if digesting a new idea. "Could a female hand deal such a knife thrust as killed Northurlund?"

"Yes," answered the surgeon, "that would be possible, for there was more skill than power in the thrust. It was meant to reach the heart and found its aim with rare precision; it could scarcely have been a blow dealt in extreme anger; the person must have been perfectly calm and collected. After all, however, I see no reason to believe it *was* dealt by a female hand, Officer. Why do you ask?"

"Nothing at all definite," answered Black with a show of indifference. "And how long should you judge the man to have been dead?"

"For some considerable time before I arrived," answered the doctor. "Though it is impossible to determine, offhand, with any degree of exactness."

"Can you add anything more to help in explaining this terrible crime?" inquired Black.

"I fear not. You have all the facts in my possession. I was called in but a short time before your arrival; and now, if you have no further use for me, I will attend to the needs of Mrs. Northurlund; she is at present bearing herself with great fortitude under these sad and terrible circumstances; but I fear a breakdown may come at any moment. A wonderful woman, Officer, wonderful woman,"—with which grave observation the physician took himself sedately away.

During this colloquy between Black and the surgeon, Wattleson had stood very stiffly beside the bathroom doorway with his head held high and far back to avoid seeing the murdered form lying on the floor. As the physician left, he turned and pulled a cock that ran off the water in the plunge.

While the water was gurgling its way out of the bath Black made a further inspection of the room, searching for finger-prints, but entirely without results, if one were to judge by his face, which showed no trace of interest at anything he saw.

At his first glance into the empty pool, however, the rather expressive features of the little man lit up with a show of satisfaction. He descended the steps of the plunge and picked up a single unset ruby that glowed there with lambent fire as if it were the final drop of life fluid fallen from the corpse lying so still upon the marble inlay floor near by.

Dropping this gem into a pocket of his coat, Black gave a careful look about the pool to make certain that there was nothing more to be seen, mounted the steps and, turning to Wattleson, said:

"You had better lock the bathroom door, Wattleson, until the coroner arrives; and, by the way, you need not mention to him that I have been here."

"Yes sir; very well, sir," answered the butler. "Where would you like to go first, sir?"

"We will begin at the top of the house, if you please, Wattleson. I should like to see every room," answered Black.

"The billiard room is at the top floor, sir," said Wattleson. "We can go up there in the elevator."

VI

THE LOCKED STUDY

AS DETECTIVE Black and his conductor Wattleson passed along the corridor of the Northurlund home toward the elevator, Black drew a powerful electric flash-tube from his pocket and examined every step of the way with minute care. Several times he stopped and carefully scraped up spots of something that appeared like dried blood into sheets of white paper and tucked them away on the inside of that gray coat of his that seemed provided with pockets beyond numbering.

Once, upon turning a corner, Black paused, listened intently, then dodged back around the corner he had just passed, muttering as he came back and joined Wattleson: "I could swear I heard a woman's footsteps trailing behind us, but there is no one there."

Entering the elevator the two men were carried to the billiard room floor. Embleton Northurlund's study and the billiard room were on one side of a long hall, and several unoccupied chambers on the other side. The elevator opened directly into the mahogany paneled billiard room. Here were two tables, a profusion of easy chairs, heavily upholstered in red leather, a wide fireplace and a number of sporting prints on the wall.

As he walked about this room Black continued his careful search with the flash light. After making a circuit of the tables he found himself before the entrance to the study, and had reached out a hand to turn the knob when Wattleson interrupted the action.

"That, sir, is the marster's private study. Beggin' your pardon, sir, but you will find the door locked. No one is hever allowed in there except the marster an' the mistress."

"I know, but haven't you a key?" asked Black impatiently.

"I 'ave not. Mr. Northurlund and the mistress are the honly parties 'avin' a key to that room. I assure you, sir, there is nothing of hinterest hin there." Wattleson appeared very earnest in his desire to keep his master's study inviolate.

Detective Black wanted to see that room; yet there were powerful reasons why he should not force his way in. Connolly's injunctions to move with extreme caution; the important fact that the coroner, certain to be a person jealous of his rights, had not yet made his investigations; and the fact that one could not reasonably proceed in the home of New York's most influential millionaire as one would in the house of a lesser notable deterred Black from doing it.

"The study is merely a sound-proof room with a smaller alcove where the marster, who was very sensitive to noise, spent a great deal of time with 'is books and 'is research work," added Wattleson.

"Research work?" inquired Black with a sudden show of interest. "What was that?"

"To speak frankly," answered Wattleson, "I do not know exactly what it was; I merely 'eard it spoken of under that name. Both the marster and the mistress were great students. As you may 'ave known, sir, Mr. and Mrs. Northurlund both took a complete graduate course in the medical and surgical line for pure love of the knowledge."

"A course in medicine and surgery," repeated Black, bringing out that notebook of his. "And do you know, Wattleson, if either your master or mistress kept any surgical instruments about the house?"

"I 'ave never seen such," answered the butler, "although you will find many strange knives and the like in the trophy room."

"We will go there at once," said Detective Black, as he turned and hurried along the hall. Here again he often stopped to listen intently and appeared much puzzled at the sounds that came to his ears.

The next floor contained the famous Northurlund ball room, an art gallery and the equally famous Northurlund trophy room. Embleton Northurlund's trophy room has been described and illustrated in the Sunday supplements a score of times and it is not necessary to say more here than that it contained a mounted specimen of nearly every member of the fauna of both Africa, India and our own West, personally killed by either Mr. or Mrs. Northurlund, and that the walls were covered with mounted heads and fancifully arranged sunbursts of native weapons.

Detective Black's inspection of the trophy room was most thorough. He evidently hoped to find there either a weapon that would fit the surgeon's description of the knife with which Northurlund had been murdered, or, at least, a record of such a knife missing; yet his efforts were entirely barren of results and he passed to the floor below.

On this floor was a family dining room, breakfast room, several guest chambers, together with the private apartments of both Mr. and Mrs. Northurlund. The nursery and children's rooms, with rooms for their attendants, were also on this floor. The street floor was given over to the main reception room, the large dinner room and the great conservatory.

Wattleson conducted the detective through all the apartments on these two floors save those of Mr. and Mrs. Northurlund, Black, meantime, making voluminous notes and diagrams in that book of his. As they finished, the detective consulted a rough diagram he held in the palm of his hand and then, turning toward Wattleson, said:

"There appears to be a portion of the house I have missed somewhere?"

"Yes sir, quite right, sir," answered Wattleson, "the kitchen and servant's quarters below-stairs, han' the apartments of the marster and mistress. Would you like to go below-stairs, sir?"

"I should prefer to inspect the apartments of your master and mistress first," answered Black.

"I do not know, sir, has that will be allowed," stammered Wattleson in dismay. "Hit is not customary; I could not permit it hon my own authority. I shall 'ave to consult Mrs. Northurlund."

"By all means," said Black, "and you may say to your mistress, Wattleson, in urging the necessity for this action, that I am strongly of the opinion that Mr. Northurlund was not killed in the bathroom, but that the crime was committed in some other part of the house; that fact is my reason for the present request."

Detective Black, awaiting the return of Wattleson from his errand, stood in the main entrance hall of the Northurlund home. While still apparently puttering about with his flash tube, he was actually listening to the sounds of the house and twice he turned about suddenly as if expecting to detect some person watching him.

The second time Black turned he also quickly tipped on the newel post electrolier, and was rewarded by seeing a darkly dressed form silently vanish behind the hangings of a doorway far down the hall. "Rather odd," muttered Black to himself. "That was a woman's form, I am certain; why has she been dogging me about ever since I came in here?"

After listening intently for a moment Black seated himself to await the return of Wattleson, who appeared to have met with considerable delay in finding his mistress and gaining her permission to inspect the remainder of the Northurlund home.

VII

CONSTANCE NORTHURLUND

THE UNSEASONABLE electric storm that had been hanging about the horizon all the evening had now broken over the city in full fury. A perfect torrent of rain was falling outside, while the humid air was frequently split by flashes of blinding light and crashing thunder that sounded like a siege from some giant artillery.

Detective Black, sitting in the hall of the Northurlund home with bowed head, pondering over his case, heard a thunderous peal, heavier than any that had gone before, and looked up to find a woman standing beneath the brilliant light of the newel post electrolier, studying him intently with glowing eyes. As Black's glance met those of this woman she spoke, quite softly, saying:

"I am Mrs. Northurlund; Wattleson informs me you would like to inspect my husband's private apartments."

Black was not insensible to beauty. He had never before seen Constance Northurlund, his idea of her appearance having been gathered solely from newspaper photographs, and he could scarcely suppress a mild gasp of astonishment at the form standing before him bathed in the brilliant plunge of light from the huge electrolier.

She stood with one hand holding to the newel post, the other clasped against her cheek with a dainty lace trifle of a handkerchief crushed against the warm olive of her skin. The face was finely chiseled, the eyes great, glowing, swimming with unshed tears; her voice and speech were arresting, a soft, low contralto. Her costume was of dark, clinging purple velvet, almost black, matching well her wealth of almost purple hair. A white collar of exquisite lace rippled from the shapely shoulders and formed the only vivid note of contrast against the somber drapery of her dress.

The woman, the perfect pose, the low, sympathetic, cultured voice, all told on the little man with the socialistic tendencies and awakened, for one single instant, a wave of sympathy in his heart, a wave that as quickly rolled back and was replaced by a feeling far different as he gave one second glance at this marvelously beautiful woman, saw that she wore but one single article of jewelry, enormous ruby ear pendants, and that the setting in the right ear was without its gem!

The spine of the little detective stiffened as he noted that missing jewel; all his muscles tensed and every instinct acquired in twenty years of police work came sharply to the fore. He felt that in all his dealings with this person there was need of masculine sternness; that there must be no shading off of careful judgment into tender pity. It appeared well within the realm of possibilities to Black that this same soft hand now holding that dainty lace handkerchief might have but recently dragged out a throbbing human heart. There was no

accounting for what these followers of strange esoteric beliefs might do.

There must be no trifling. The voice that answered Constance Northurlund was kindly; but the eyes that now looked her way were keen and cold as the northern light.

"I am very sorry to disturb you at this time, very sorry," said Black as he jumped quickly to his feet and bowed with the grace of a true courtier before this radiant vision. "But Madam will surely recognize the necessities of my profession."

The polite appeal had its force. "I do indeed appreciate your position, Officer Black," answered Constance Northurlund with but the slightest sign of a tremble in her voice that now became softly plaintive, causing Black to wonder if this woman were not the most amazing and skillful actress who had ever existed away from the footlights. "I hope you will spare no possible effort to bring the murder of—of my husband to justice. There is nothing you can ask from me toward this end that I shall consider unreasonable. You are quite at liberty to go through my husband's living apartments and—and my own if you desire. I trust you will pardon me if I do not accompany you. I will remain here until you return; Wattleson will conduct you wherever you wish: I have so instructed him."

So far there had been nothing in either Mrs. Northurlund's speech or actions to denote more than the agitation to be expected from a woman whose husband had but recently been found so cruelly murdered.

At Detective Black's next question Constance Northurlund's agitation became more pronounced and, for the first time, the blood left her face and even the olive skin became almost marble white beneath the glare of the electrolier.

"And if Madam will permit me, I should like to pass through your husband's study on the billiard room floor," was all the detective had said, a simple enough request in itself, yet the manner in which it was met but added further fuel to the fire of suspicion that was beginning to blaze high in the breast of the ambitious little detective.

"I—I fear that what you ask is quite impossible," answered Mrs. Northurlund with a queer choking sob in her throat. "I am very sorry to deny you, but really—really I have no key to that room. I had one but it has been mislaid. My husband also had a key, but I haven't the remotest idea where it is. Perhaps—perhaps to-morrow. Will not to-morrow do?"

There was just the least trace of a siren note in her voice as Constance Northurlund braced herself to make this last request. Detective Black caught the note and thought it wise to change his tactics.

"When did you see your husband last and how did he pass the day since this morning?" he inquired.

"I saw Embleton last at breakfast; it is always a family meal at which the children, my two sons, aged five and nine, attend. He mentioned, casually, at the table, that he would be about the house during the morning. After breakfast I went to the nursery, remaining there some time. When I returned to my own apartments Mr. Northurlund had gone to his study or to the billiard room. I did not see him again until—until—" Mrs. Northurlund's voice broke into soul wracking sobs and she bowed her head upon the newel post.

"Will you not be seated?" quickly inquired Black, bringing forward a chair. "I deeply regret the necessity for these questions and would spare you them if I could."

"Oh, I am glad to tell you anything you wish to know," said Mrs. Northurlund, making a brave effort to regain her composure as she straightened up and waved the chair away with one hand. "If there is anything you wish to know that might help your quest I trust you will not spare my feelings in any degree."

"Is there any person within your own establishment whom you might suspect of this crime?" asked Black.

"No indeed," declared Mrs. Northurlund with considerable emphasis. "I have the most implicit faith in every one of my servants."

"Had your husband any known enemies outside?"

"I do not believe Embleton had an

enemy in the world," answered Constance. "I have searched my recollections for years to think who could possibly have been so cruel and I cannot remember even a casual acquaintance with the remotest cause for ill feeling against him."

"Mr. Northurlund had a man, I believe. What was his name?" inquired Black as Mrs. Northurlund became more calm.

"His name was Ranam Singh," answered Mrs. Northurlund with a little sigh of relief. "He is a servant we brought from India and of whom my husband was very fond. He is allowed a great many liberties not usually accorded to our attendants and frequently spends the day with his friend Ramchutta Sundey, who is curry chef at the Exploration Club. Ranam is a Hindoo, while Ramchutta is a Christian, and Ranam tells me he is endeavoring to draw his friend back to become a true believer," rattled on Mrs. Northurlund a bit hysterically, as if she were endeavoring to guide the detective's thoughts along some desired new channels.

At Mrs. Northurlund's mention of the name Ramchutta Sundey—the same that had been signed to the strange, mixed up letter the detective had received, Black bent eagerly forward to catch every syllable she uttered, meanwhile storing away a mental note that this Indian chef at the Exploration Club must be summoned to police headquarters for conference as soon as he himself returned there.

At this moment Wattleson came down the stairs and the detective, after taking leave of Mrs. Northurlund with studied politeness, followed her major domo. As Black vanished along the corridor, Constance Northurlund fell limply into a chair with a sigh of relief.

VIII

A DISCOVERY

WHILE the pelting rain continued to beat its weird tattoo upon the windows and the thunder rattled and roared outside, Detective Black was conducted by Wattleson through the living rooms of the murdered man. The detective's search was thorough; yet he found nothing that appeared to have a bearing upon the crime.

"We will now pass through your mistress' apartments, if you please, Wattleson," said Black turning to his conductor after finishing his inspection of Mr. Northurlund's rooms.

Wattleson, thoroughly disgusted with this freedom permitted the man from police headquarters, led the way with tip tilted nose and an air of most ruefully wounded dignity.

"Mrs. Northurlund's morning salon," said Wattleson, reverently entering an elegantly arranged room that clearly indicated the exquisite taste of its occupant in every artistic appointment. Nothing here to interest Detective Black and they moved on.

"Mr. Northurlund's sitting room," announced the finely modulated voice of the major domo next. Still no matters to awaken police enthusiasm, and they passed toward Mrs. Northurlund's chamber.

"Hif you do not mind, sir," said Wattleson at this door, putting into his voice all the outraged feelings and scorn of a half score generations of loyal servitors, "I should greatly prefer not to accompany you hinto my mistress' chamber, han' I feel obliged to hadd that I do not approve of it, not at all, sir, not even takin' into consideration the law which you represent. I will remain standing at one side 'ere if you do not mind."

Detective Black did not in the least mind and so expressed himself as he drew aside the heavy hangings at the door and passed into the chamber. Here he worked very thoroughly. There was scarcely a square inch of the dainty boudoir that did not pass beneath his eagle eye. Still nothing; yet, feeling certain that there must be, somewhere, a trace of that for which he searched, Black began at the door and went over the entire room again.

Thus engaged in his quiet and methodical progress about the room, Black had gone as far as the fireplace when patience met its reward. Reaching one arm up inside the flue, the detective's hand came in contact with a hanging

cloth bag suspended from a hook. Taking this down he loosened the drawstring and poured the contents upon the tile hearth.

Before the eyes of the detective there streamed out a glittering horde of bent and twisted gold work, bracelets, tiaras, coronets, rings, ear drops and insignias of many orders of merit, all gorgeously carved and wrought in fanciful Eastern fashion and all showing where hundreds of great gems had been torn from their settings. It was undoubtedly the jewelry from which had been taken the Maharaja of Kaphortana's rubies. Black gazed on the fascinating assortment with wide eyed amazement as he muttered:

"I knew there was something in these rooms somewhere. I could see it in her eyes; but she thought they were safely hid or she'd never have let me search." Then Thomas Black stopped a moment in the process of examining the ruby rifled settings and knit his brows as he thought: "By heaven, what a shame, too, so fine a female and mixed up in two murders; but there's no accounting for what a woman will do when she begins to follow after those strange Eastern religious cults."

After returning the jewelry settings to the bag, Black hung this back up in the flue where he had first found it, carefully inspected the hearth to see that no trace of his discovery was being left behind and then rejoined the butler in the hallway.

"I think, Wattleson," said the detective, "that my inspection of the house is finished, and I will not disturb you further."

"Askin' your pardon, Hofficer, but do you not wish to interview the people below-stairs? Hi think we should all feel a bit easier in our minds if that were done, especially as one of our number 'as recently disappeared, and very strangely, too."

"A servant disappeared," repeated Black with a show of interest. "When did this occur? Who was he?"

"She went, for it was a young girl," answered Wattleson, "this morning. She was a new recruit, an' a very raw one, too, sir—a scrub girl named Matilda Myers. My mistress recently secured 'er from 'er summer 'ome in the state of Vermont, I 'ad my suspicions of the girl from the first, sir; she was too pert, too pert altogether. This very day, sir, on which the marster was so cruelly murdered, I sent this person to the billiard room to cleanse the windows an' she 'as not been seen since. Disappeared entirely; hand took 'er wash bucket! She was somewhat a favorite of the mistress, or I should have taken the liberty of discharging her before, she was so young han' awkward. Very suspicious circumstance, don't you think, Officer?"

"A Vermont country girl, you say?" repeated Black, smiling inwardly at the open animosity of the English butler. "I scarcely think the fact is of any consequence; she will probably turn up all right before to-morrow. If she does not we will look into the matter. This is not a servant's crime; of that I am reasonably certain, so let your mind rest easy on that score, Wattleson."

"I am obliged to disagree with you, Hofficer, beggin' your pardon. As for myself, I strongly suspect the young girl I mentioned," said Wattleson as he conducted the detective to the door. "Hand if I hever lay my two heyes on thet baggage I shall feel obliged to take 'er hinto custody myself an' bring 'er to police headquarters without delay. Good-night, sir."

Little did either Wattleson or Detective Black suspect that both of them had but recently stood within a few feet of this same strangely missing servant, who lay stretched out insensible on the rug in Northurlund's study, while Wattleson explained to Black why he could not enter that special sanctum of his late master.

IX

AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS

It was ten-thirty when the taxicab containing Detective Tom Black drew up at police headquarters and the little man hurried up to the office of Second Deputy Commissioner Connolly, who was awaiting him there.

"Well, what do you know?" asked Connolly as Black dropped into a chair beside his desk.

"Enough to close up the greatest case we ever handled; enough to send Mrs. Embleton Northurlund to the electric chair," declared the detective with an obvious note of satisfaction in his voice.

"Wh—a—at!" barked Connolly in one long drawn out exclamation of astonishment. "I don't believe it; you've been hitting the hop; she isn't the kind of woman that does murder!"

"Can't help what kind she is," returned Black. "We've got the goods on her." And he related the complete story of his recent visit to the Northurlund's Fifth Avenue home, adding at the end: "Connolly, she had those rifled ruby settings belonging to the Maharaja of Kaphortana concealed in her chamber; that's enough to condemn her, isn't it? But she had also lost the stone from one of her ear drops and that stone I found at the bottom of the plunge-bath where Northurlund's body had been carried, for I am satisfied he never was killed in the bath."

"Well, where was he killed?" asked Connolly.

"I believe the actual murder took place in the Northurlund study," declared Black. "I found an almost imperceptible series of blood stains, apparently leading from the top floor study toward the bathroom, and Mrs. Northurlund refused to allow me access to the study, or, rather, declared it was impossible to do so because both her husband's and her own key had been mislaid. This was mere subterfuge on her part. I did not force the study door because of your instructions to make no direct move or do anything that would interfere with the coroner's work. I am certain also that Mrs. Northurlund was dogging my footsteps all the time I was examining the top floors."

"Looks bad, all-fired bad," declared Connolly as Black finished his report. "We'd better try to get Mrs. Northurlund down here for an interview. I think about thirty minutes of mild third degree ought to open up her case to the daylight pretty thoroughly."

"Shall I take a couple of men and get her at once?" asked Black eagerly.

"Certainly not," answered Connolly. "This is a delicate matter, Tom; you can't rough-house it through as you would if she was Shady Liz from Hester Street. Mrs. Northurlund is one of the leaders of New York society, besides being the widow of a man worth many million dollars. I'll telephone her to come down the first thing in the morning. It'll all keep until then; besides, there's a few loose ends I want you to catch up first."

"Do you think she will come here on a telephone message?" inquired Black.

"Think? I know," answered Connolly. "I know these blue blooded rich; they are not rabbits; they never run. It's only your professional crook, or a poor, starved innocent that cuts out. She'd come if she were guilty of every crime in the decalogue.

"Now let's catch up these loose ends: first, that chef, Ramchutta Sundey, who wrote you that strangely mixed up letter about the case. Where did Mrs. Northurlund tell you he was employed?"

"At the Exploration Club," answered Black after consulting his note book.

"All right, better run over there, see that chap and find out what he meant by that letter. If there is anything important to be gotten out of him, bring him in here. The thing looks rather crazy to me, but you never can tell."

X

SEARCHING FOR RAMCHUTTA SUNDEY

THE night clerk at the Exploration Club, a tall chap with a cadaverous face, was affability itself when Black arrived there, informed him who he was and inquired if they had in their employ an Indian curry chef named Ramchutta Sundey.

"We have," said the clerk, "and he is more bother to us than a cage of monkeys, with the queer characters who follow him about; but several of our members insist that curry dishes can be properly prepared only by a native East Indian and so we are forced to keep him. He's a good-natured enough fellow himself, a missionary educated Christian, I believe. Do you wish to see him?"

Upon Black's declaring that he did, the clerk called up the kitchens on the house telephone only to find that, this being Monday, it was Ramchutta Sundey's evening out.

"What's his home address?" inquired Black.

The Exploration Club clerk consulted the bookkeeper and found Ramchutta Sundey's home address to be at number nine-fifty-eight Avenue A, near Fifty-fourth Street and the East River. Toward Avenue A Detective Black started at once.

Avenue A at this point proved to be a rather lonely section in the evening, and Black found the number designated was a ramshackle brick building. The two lower floors were used as a wholesale storage warehouse for East Indian merchandise and the two upper floors as residential quarters of some sort, as he judged from the lighted windows.

Before paying his call at number nine-fifty-eight Black thought it wise to find the nearest fixed-post man and advise him of what he was about to do. The nearest officer on peg post turned out to be Patrolman Patrick G. McAnerny, an old friend of his, as Black soon discovered.

Officer McAnerny was a fine portly fellow with a rosy countenance, heavy red mustache and a rare twinkle in his eye. You would have liked Patrolman McAnerny the moment you saw that roguish eye, liked him better when you heard the hearty, manly voice that boomed from his cavernous chest.

Both titles of patrolman and fixed-post man proved to be misnomers in McAnerny's case, for he was neither patrolling nor on fixed post, being at the moment engaged in good-natured banter with a voice that appeared to proceed from the indistinct rear regions of a near-by oyster house against one corner of which the officer was taking his leisure and picking his teeth at the same time.

"What do you know about the people in nine-fifty-eight?" inquired Black of McAnerny.

"Dom little, Tom," answered McAnerny in a deep, throaty voice, "except that they're the measliest lot of blackbirds that I ever set me eyes on; they're not smokes; nayther are they guineas, a sort of cross bechune the chu, 'tis my belief. The only dacent thing about thim is they don't eat meat on Fridays. But nayther do they eat it on any other day," added McAnerny with a chuckle. "There's three men regular and two men and one woman that come and go; the first three works in the wholesale warehouse there; the others has jobs as cooks and valets, I think, for some of the big bugs over on Fifth Avner. If ye're goin' in there I'll hang around for a spell and, if ye don't come out soon, I'll pay them a call myself. I'd like nothin' better than to get one dacent crack at that rat-eyed one that goes around the city in his underdrawers and with his head bound up in a rag."

XI

THE RAT-EYED MAN

Black found an outside iron stairway jammed in between the warehouse and an adjoining building and mounted this to the upper floor of number nine-fifty-eight Avenue A, where a light was shining in the windows. Upon rapping smartly on the iron fire door at the second landing the detective's call was answered by the man McAnerny had evidently alluded to as the "rat-eyed one." He was a short, stocky fellow with mummy-like, mahogany colored features, dressed in dirty white cotton trousers, a blue silk jacket of like disreputableness and a white cotton turban, that, through some miracle, was spotlessly clean.

The "rat-eyed one" looked his caller over with evident disfavor as he opened the door a few inches and peered out, speaking hoarsely: "This no beer house; go way. Good India boys live here."

Detective Black spoke Hindustani, but judged it wise not to disclose that fact as he pushed his boot into the jamb of the door and said:

"I came from the Exploration Club. I want to see Ramchutta Sundey. Is he here?"

The rat-eyed man grunted something unintelligible and opened the door wider that he might gain a clearer view of the visitor. Then, apparently satisfied

with his inspection, he surlily answered: "Yes, come in."

The man conducted Black along a hallway littered with rubbish of all sorts and rapped three times before opening a heavy batten door that gave into another room.

As the door opened Black saw—and smelled—what he decided was about the most disorderly apartment he had ever looked into. It was crowded with a thousand odds and ends of bright hued carpet, well worn rugs, bits of old brass work, cast off garments of Oriental origin and Eastern gimcracks in every stage of repair and disrepair. It was evidently a room devoted to the unconsidered flotsam and jetsam from the wholesale Eastern importing house below. A cheap glass kerosene lamp was set down in a cleared space in the middle of the floor and around this were gathered three dark faced men engaged in playing some sort of a gambling game with bits of colored bone.

The men squatted on the floor were arguing violently among themselves in a whining patois and all looked up as Black entered. His conductor spoke to them in Hindustani, naming the visitor's errand and addressing his remarks more particularly to a man seated nearest the door, whom Black rightly took to be Ramchutta Sundey.

Even squatted on his heels as he was, the detective could see that Ramchutta Sundey was tall and straight as an arrow; his black beard was carefully parted in the middle, his large turban rakishly worn on one side with a silver star of merit pinned to one fold. Black set the man down in his mind at once as a Sikh and noted with satisfaction that his snapping eyes were intelligent and his bearing held little of the slinking attitude of the others gathered there.

From the tone in which the rat-eyed man addressed Ramchutta Sundey Black inferred that the man he desired to see was not in particularly high favor with the others and the suspicious glances the other men shot toward the Sikh when the detective spoke confirmed the impression.

"What does the Sahib wish of me?" asked Ramchutta Sundey, rising to his feet and standing at attention with military precision.

"A few moments talk in private, if you please, Chef," answered Black, noting as he spoke that the rat-eyed man translated his words into Hindustani for the benefit of the others.

Ramchutta Sundey had already answered: "As the Sahib wishes," and started toward the door when two of the seated men leaped to their feet and stood between him and the exit. "We are brothers," declared one of them sullenly. "There can be no secrets among us. If the Sahib has anything to say let him speak that we may all hear his words."

At this point Detective Black, skillful man that he was, made a tactical error; he drew from his pocket the crudely written letter he had received in the mail signed *"Ramchutta Sundey"* and holding it toward that person inquired: "Did you send that to me?" Then things began to happen.

First, Ramchutta Sundey leaned forward to inspect the letter; then the rat-eyed man, who had picked up the foul smelling kerosene lamp from the floor, did the same. The eyes of the rat-eyed man proved quicker than those of the curry chef; he had no sooner perused the first few words of Black's letter than he shouted a violent warning in Hindustani to the others, dashed the lamp to the floor and leaped toward the detective, clasping Black about the throat with his wiry little arms and tightening his strangle hold with all the power at his command.

Since first entering the room, Black had steadily kept one hand in his coat pocket, where it clasped his automatic. At the instant the rat-eyed man landed on him Black's first instinct was to shoot, both as a means of letting McAnerny know he was in trouble and with the hope that his shots might take effect. His shots were of no avail, however, for the sounds of a shuffling struggle indicated that all the men, with the exception of the rat-eyed person, were behind him engaged in an effort to subdue the chef, Ramchutta Sundey.

The grasp on the detective's throat grew tighter and his eyes almost popped from his head as he fell backward to

the floor, throwing all his weight downward to knock the wind from his antagonist and thus weaken the hold on his throat. But the rat-eyed man was too quick for him and squirmed to one side like an eel, never relaxing that death-grip on Black's throat.

As they struggled across the floor Black saw that the tinder like litter of the room had caught fire from the broken lamp in a dozen places. The other men in the room evidently sensed this danger from fire at the same moment as did Black, for, in the fitful light from the blaze, he could see shadowy forms retreating toward the hallway.

Half choked and nearly senseless he tried to drag himself in the same direction, only to fall flat on his hands, the rat-eyed man still clinging desperately to his throat and screaming curses at the height of his croaking voice.

The overpowering fumes of the burning fabric that littered the floor added greatly to the difficulty Black found in breathing with the rat-eyed man hanging to his throat. This smoke, however, was not without effect on his antagonist, and the detective felt the hold on his throat relax as the man began to choke and sputter.

At last Black succeeded in shaking off the man clinging to him, only to find that he was hemmed in on all sides by the oil-soaked bits of carpet that were now burning furiously. Instinct twice drove him to attempt breaking through this barrier of fire only to find himself pulled back by the rat-eyed man grasping his legs.

With a final effort to gain the hallway through the ring of fire, Black found strength failing him utterly and he fell limply back on the floor, losing consciousness just as he saw the portly form of Officer McAnerny dart through the smoke, kicking burning cloth to the right and left, and followed by a young girl with abundant red hair, a profusion of freckles and staring eyes that seemed to be spread wide with joyous excitement rather than with any sense of fear. Detective Black decided at once that the girl part of what he thought he saw could only be an hallucination.

XII

MATILDA MYERS, DETECTIVE

THANKS to a perfect constitution and young country blood that coagulates as quickly as that of an animal, the stab wound received by Matilda Myers, window washer in the Northurlund home on upper Fifth Avenue, when she attempted to prevent the murder of her master in his study, was not a serious one. The knife had passed in just above the shoulder blade, emerging at the lower edge of that same bone and coming in contact with nothing in its progress save solid muscular tissue. It did not even spill any great amount of blood.

The general result of her wound to Tilly was but little more than a period of unconsciousness and an arm that seemed all tingling nerves from neck to finger tips when she was brought back to her senses by a tremendous peal of thunder that appeared to shake the Northurlund house to its very foundation stones. This was Destiny knocking at Tilly's doorway, but she did not know it; in fact for several minutes Tilly sensed very little of anything save a darting pain in her shoulder whenever she moved.

The room where Tilly lay was in darkness and she was obliged to await another flash of lightning before she quite realized her surroundings; then all came back to her in an instant and she again repeated the same explosive remark she had last made before lapsing into unconsciousness: "Go-o-osh!" But now it was spoken with a chuckle of delight rather than with a gasp of dismay.

"A reel murder!" declared Tilly to herself in a stage whisper, "an' me the only witness. Me the only person on earth who knows who done it. Aint it gorgeous!"

In her mind's eye at this moment the little scrub girl had visions that fairly outdid the wildest imaginative flights of her favorite "Old Slouch" himself. She saw herself skillfully trailing her master's murderer, disguised, of course, for no detective work could be properly accomplished without this important aid to concealed identity. And then, after

wading through dangers shoulder-deep, would come the climax and the trial, with Matilda Myers in the limelighted center of it all. This was, perhaps, one of the most perfect moments the drab little window scrubber was ever to know, for realization has a sad habit of lagging far behind anticipation.

"I know who done it," declared Tilly. "But now, how to git her, an' git her fust, for I reckon there'll be a dozen city detectives on the trail by this time!" Tilly used that word "trail" with the oilest of unction.

As a dart of lightning, more vivid than any that had yet come, flashed the details of the room before Tilly's eyes, she got rather shakily to her feet and walked to the door. It was locked, but Tilly caught sight of the window through which she had originally come, and gritting her teeth to keep down the pains that shot through her disabled shoulder whenever she moved, climbed out upon the roof, going thence toward the billiard room window, which she had left open when coming outside to complete the process of washing it.

Tilly found her bucket and mop where she had left it; but some one had closed and locked the billiard room window. She crawled along the roof and tried each of the other windows in succession. They were all tightly fastened.

Crouching as close as possible to the overhanging roof of a window to avoid the rain, Tilly had about given up hope of gaining an entrance when she saw the billiard room door open and Wattleson stepped out. The butler was making his customary tour of the house to see that all was in proper order before he retired.

Tilly screamed her loudest and pounded heavily on the glass. Wattletleson, his nerve already sadly shaken by the distressing incidents of the murder, gave one glance at the chalk-white face of the little scrub girl gazing in at him, fell limply into a chair and came precious near to duplicating the swoon that he had earlier explained to Detective Black was the first contretemps of that sort to occur in his life.

It was only the fact that Tilly in her excitement pounded so hard as to break one of the window panes that saved the butler from losing his senses entirely. One of the chief crosses of Wattleson's life was maids with a propensity for smashing cut glass and chinaware. At the first crackle of the shattered glass he stiffened his spine and strode toward the window.

"Why, it's Myers!" shouted Wattleson as he approached the window, unfastened it and threw up the sash, permitting the dripping Tilly to climb inside. "What on hearth were you doing out there in the rain, Myers?"

"Doin'," repeated Tilly scornfully. "I was washin' them winders on the outside this mornin' when some one come and locked me out. I've been tryin' to git back ever since, but all the rest of the winders was locked, too. I'm wet as a fish and hungry as a bear."

"Myers, I always told you them low 'abits of yours would get you into trouble," scolded Wattleson. "Now see your condition."

"Condition aint nothin'," snapped Tilly, with her mind full of thoughts regarding what a full-fledged detective would do and say under like conditions. "I feel fine. First, I want somethin' to eat, and there's a certin member of this household I want to git my hands on without any delay."

"It seems to me, Myers, that you hare hexpressing your wishes rather cockily for a scrub girl that disappeared from the premises this morning with one of our wash buckets," chided Wattleson. "Per'aps you are not haware, Myers, that hin your absence the marster of the 'ouse 'as been foully murdered? A detective from police 'eadquarters 'as just been 'ere interviewing the mistress."

"What!" shouted Tilly, turning toward the butler with a stream of water spurting from each shoe. "A reel detective? Never mind the eating now, Mr. Wattleson. I must get to work. First: where is the mistress?" As Tilly asked this question she grasped the butler by his coat lapel, stood on her tiptoes and fairly hissed her question in his ear.

"Hif you refer to Mrs. Northurlund, she is very likely in 'er room being at-

tended to by 'er personal maid, Kunda."

"I must see both of them at once," hoarsely whispered Tilly.

"Myers, 'ave you gone hout of your senses?" asked Wattleson with a startled air as he looked closely at the scrub girl. "You hact very strange. I fear the storm and hexposure 'as gone to your 'ead. You certainly must know you cannot go to Mrs. Northurlund's room in your wet condition. The kitchen is your place, Myers; come along, now."

Wattleson did not know that he was addressing a disciple of the renowned Old Slouch or perhaps he would not have been so free with his peremptory commands. Even butlers might be expected to have some reverence for such a world-wide celebrity.

"Can't go to Mrs. Northurlund's apartments," repeated Tilly as she drew back and assumed a decidedly pugnacious attitude. "Are you aware, Mr. Wattleson, sir, that I not only knew the master was murdered, but I know who done it? I seen the deed committed."

Eager as Tilly was to apprehend her employer's murderer she could not forego this brief moment of triumph with the butler who had so persistently lorded it over her. Tilly fully expected that Wattleson would either be dazed with the realization of her importance when she told him this, or faint with horror at the thought that a young girl like herself had been present when so terrible a crime was committed. The butler did neither.

On Wattleson the effect of Tilly's statement was decidedly alarming to the plans the scrub girl had in mind. "I knew it," declared the butler with a gleam of satisfaction in his cold eye. "I've 'ad my suspicions of you, Myers, from the first. Going hoff with our bucket; I told that detective so, too." Taking tight hold of Tilly's arm, he continued: "You will come with me to police 'eadquarters at once, Myers. I believe I 'ave *my* 'and on the marster's murderer at this minute. Come along!"

"Ouch!" shrilled Tilly as a new series of darting pains shot toward her finger tips at the butler's touch. "Leggo my arm, that's where I got stabbed!"

At the word *stabbed* Wattleson was more than ever convinced that Miss Matilda Myers was a person with whom the police authorities ought to have immediate conversation. He endeavored to drag the scrub girl toward the elevator while Tilly resisted with all her power. The butler had almost gained the elevator door when Tilly saw her chance. Just as the butler stepped in a pool of water made by her own dripping garments, Tilly placed one wet shoe behind Wattleson's ankle and skillfully tripped up her captor. The butler slid backward with a tremendous crash and the scrub girl felt herself free.

Tilly darted into the elevator, slammed the door shut and pressed the descending button. As she shot down she had a fleeting glimpse of Wattleson lying senseless on the floor. Whether the butler had a fractured skull or was merely rendered momentarily unconscious by the force with which his head had struck the floor, Tilly did not know or care; detectives on duty cannot be expected to worry about such small matters as that. That Tilly was now free to pursue her detective plans without his hindrance was enough for her.

XIII

MATILDA ON THE TRAIL

MATILDA moved quickly along the second floor hallway of the Northurlund home. Her path was heavily carpeted, yet she trod as softly as would a dainty footed kitten. She deemed that to be the only manner of walking countenanced by "Old Slouch" when one was "on the trail."

The hallway was empty and Tilly knew precisely where she wanted to go, knew exactly whom she wished to find. Instead, however, of going directly there, she dodged about behind hangings and into odd doorways as if she expected somebody might grab her at any moment. Frequently she placed one finger to her lips and said "Hist!" below her breath. Tilly was having the time of her life and she was actually rather sorry when she arrived at the

doorway of Mrs. Embleton Northurlund's chamber without encountering a solitary soul to contest her progress.

Tilly applied her eye to the keyhole and peeped cautiously within. Now let it be thoroughly understood that Matilda Myers, in proper person, was not a young girl in the habit of cooling her eye at keyholes. Ordinarily she would have considered such action to be extremely disgraceful; but, just now, Matilda Myers was not in proper person; she was a disciple of "Old Slouch" himself, no less, disguised as a humble little scrub girl.

The chamber was dimly lighted, but empty. Tilly turned the knob softly and stepped within; then she edged along the wall until she came to the open door of a closet in which hung a multiplicity of feminine gowns and negligees. Here she paused as a soft rustle of some one stirring about came from the room beyond. Tilly did not say "Hist!" but it was on the very tip of her tongue as she dodged within the closet and hid herself behind the gowns.

The swaying gowns that hid Tilly's form had scarcely settled back to stillness when the heavy brocade hangings between Mrs. Northurlund's chamber and the adjoining room were parted and the maid Kunda stepped inside. Kunda was olive-skinned and lithe as a leopard; she had sharp, brilliant eyes that shone like new shoe-buttons; her dress was of soft, light blue silk drapery wound about her form in graceful folds.

After glancing about the chamber to assure herself that she was alone, Kunda darted back through the brocade hangings.

Tilly, from a peephole between two magnificent satin opera gowns that had cost more money than the little scrub girl ever saw or hoped to see in all her lifetime, watched the actions of Kunda the maid.

Kunda had been gone but a moment when she returned, her form enveloped in one of her mistress' opera cloaks, carrying a heavy bag. As she came into the dimly lighted room Tilly could not fail to be struck by the strong resemblance between mistress and maid when both were clothed in the outer garments of civilization. For an instant the scrub girl could not be certain whether it was Kunda or Mrs. Northurlund who was passing through the room. She finally decided it was Kunda, sure enough.

"Goin' to hop the twig, aint you?" thought Tilly as the maid hurried through the chamber. "But you wont git far out of my sight."

Kunda fled silently down the deserted corridor, to the stairs and toward the front door of the Northurlund home. Tilly moved as quietly and as swiftly but a short distance behind. She had taken the liberty of selecting a velvet wrap from Mrs. Northurlund's wardrobe and tossed it about her shoulders so that it concealed all but her eyes.

Kunda opened the front door and peered out, looking both up and down the street. The heavy rain had now ceased and upper Fifth Avenue was quite deserted at this late hour of the night. Kunda stepped out. Tilly, after waiting a moment, followed, keeping the maid's form in sight, yet remaining so far behind that Kunda could scarcely suspect she was being followed.

Tilly knew very little of New York streets, and, after following the maid for a few blocks, was quite as much lost as though she were in the midst of an African jungle, yet it made slight difference to her.

The scrub girl had a pretty definite idea that this strange East Indian maid had killed her master, yet she was not absolutely certain of this, because, at the time of the murder, the person committing the crime had been dressed in such clothing as Tilly knew was usually worn by Mr. Northurlund's valet, Ranam Singh. Although she had noted the strong resemblance between Kunda and her mistress the thought that Mrs. Northurlund might have committed the crime never entered Tilly's head.

Tilly might easily have aroused the household and denounced Kunda before she left the Northurlund home; yet such a course would have seemed to the scrub girl as altogether contrary to paper-bound detective story ethics; also Tilly did not mean to forego her opportunity to do a little shadowing before

giving up Kunda to the proper authorities. So, although she passed several fixed post men on her progress down Fifth Avenue, Tilly paid them no more attention than was necessary to get by their stations without being halted on her journey. Just now the little scrub girl's main idea was to keep close on the trail of Kunda, to discover what she carried in the bag and where she was going. Tilly had an idea the bag might contain the rubies that had been stolen from her master at the time he was murdered.

After passing down Fifth Avenue a short distance, Kunda turned east into streets less brightly lighted, and Tilly hurried along closer. They had gone but a few blocks in this order when Tilly caught the gleam of the East River shining directly ahead and noted that Kunda quickened her pace.

"I'll be switched if I don't believe she is goin' to drown herself," muttered Tilly as Kunda stepped out onto a short pier at the end of Fifty-sixth Street, which happened to be scarcely more than a stone's throw from Officer Patrick G. McAnerny's fixed post.

Permitting this suspected murderess of Mr. Northurlund thus easily to escape the lawful consequences of her crime was a decided shock to Tilly's dreams of detective glory; yet her chief present concern was largely for the bag the maid carried and its contents.

Tilly darted ahead and made a frantic grab at this bag just as Kunda, reaching the string-piece of the pier, made a motion as if about to cast it into the river.

The little scrub girl found the bag in her grasp, noted that it was very heavy and turned to dart and run beyond the supposed Kunda's reach when she heard her exclaim in startled tones:

"Why, Myers, what on earth are you doing here? Give me back that bag."

Tilly was so astonished and frightened that she continued to run with all speed possible despite the fact that she had recognized the voice of Mrs. Northurlund speaking. It was mistress instead of maid that Tilly had so joyfully shadowed from the Fifth Avenue house.

XIV

TILLY ASSISTS AT A RESCUE

TILLY had not the remotest idea where she was, or where she was going, as she sped on. Her only desire was to get where she might collect her thoughts and consider matters. She might have gone west, or north, but, as chance would have it, as it so often does in this world's affairs, she turned south and, running south, she could not escape passing Officer McAnerny's fixed post. Tilly had gone but a short distance when suddenly a heavy hand descended upon her shoulder—that disabled shoulder again—and a voice boomed in her ear:

"Now, now, my fine girrul, don't be in such a hurry! Where are ye goin' to with that bag and velvet opery cloak?" And Tilly found herself caught up short in the firm grasp of Officer Patrick G. McAnerny, who dragged the bag from her hand and turned her face toward the light of a near-by incandescent.

"Ouch!" yelled Tilly, attempting to free herself from McAnerny's grasp. "That's my lame shoulder; I was stabbed there. Leggo, you chucklehead!"

"Stabbed, was ut?" repeated the officer. "Then I think I'd bether get a bether hold. Who assaulted yer and what have yer got in this here bag, now?"

Officer McAnerny took a firm grasp about Tilly's waist with one arm and snapped open the bag with his unoccupied hand.

"Howlysaintpatrick!" exclaimed McAnerny in one astonished breath, as his eyes met that famous collection of rubies Mrs. Northurlund had worn upon the opening night at the Metropolitan Opera House. "It's filled with jew'ls enough to thrim up the queen of Egypt herself. You're a fine bird, you are, not out of short dresses, and been robbin' Tiffany's. You'll come along with me in the pathrol wagon; that's what you'll do. Ut's a dom shame, too, a little thing like you to be caught with enough stuff swiped to send you up the river for twenty years!" And Officer McAnerny started toward the nearest

telephone box, dragging Tilly, who had now gathered her scattered senses enough to scream in his ear:

"Hold up, Mr. Policeman! Leave go there; I didn't steal any jewels. Those belong to my mistress, Mrs. Northurlund. I'm not a thief; I'm Old Slouch the detective an' you better leave holt of me!" It was the most impressive statement little Tilly could think of to make at the moment.

"You're 'Old Slouch,' are ye?" growled McAnerny with a chuckle. "To my mind you're bug, that's what you are," and he stopped beneath a street light to gain a better view of Tilly's face. "By Juro!" he declared. "'Tis the Northurlund case Black was workin' on, and ye don't look like a burgler, either; ye look more like a country lass that 'ud got lost in this bad city. They raise no such crop of freckles as that on Broadway—or any other New York street. Now if I—" The big-hearted policeman had proceeded no farther than this in his last statement when the air of the deserted street was punctured by a series of staccato shots from an automatic pistol.

"Murdher! I'd clean forgot Detective Black was alone in that buildin' an' by the sounds he's in trouble," declared McAnerny as he stopped short in his progress toward the telephone box.

"A reel detective, an' in trouble?" gleefully thrilled Tilly, to whom these words were quite as much a call to arms as were the pistol shots to the patrolman. "Where is he? Come on, Mr. Policeman, we'll rescue him!" And she tried to drag the big officer in the direction from which the shots had sounded.

Keeping one hand clasped on Tilly's wrist, McAnerny and the scrub girl started rapidly toward the East Indian wholesale warehouse where the patrolman had last seen Detective Black mounting the outside iron stairway to interview Ramchutta Sundey, the Indian curry chef.

"Leave holt of my arm and we can run better," shouted Tilly. "Don't be a darn fool; I aint no burglar; I wont run away from you."

"I'll chance it," panted McAnerny, whose unerring instincts had rightly gauged the value of Tilly's youth and honest appearing face. He released his hold on Tilly's wrist. "I'll have to dhrop this here bag behint the stairway here, too," he added. "'Tis less account, I'm thinkin', than Black's throuble."

The officer shoved the bag out of sight under the stairs, pulled out his revolver and began to mount the stairway with the little scrub girl close beside him. "Here, take that," he cried, handing his night stick to Tilly, "an' crack anything with a dirty face that comes under it. This here is the nest of brown blackbirds that Tom has gone into and I'll be pleased to see yer break that stick on ther skull of ary one of thim."

The sounds of shots had scarcely ceased when Tilly and Officer McAnerny reached the second landing, only to find the iron fire door closed and fastened. They could hear loud, inarticulate cries coming from within and thin strings of acrid smelling smoke were beginning to curl up from a near-by window that was partly open at the top.

Tilly beat frantically upon the iron door with the night stick and McAnerny threw his vast bulk against it in a vain effort to burst it in. The door held solid.

"'Tis locked from the inside," said McAnerny. The officer glanced toward the window that stood just beyond his reach to the left; then he looked at Tilly; her conduct so far had not failed to make a strong impression on his mind. "Come now, up on me shoulders, crawl in that window and unfasten the door," he said as he went down a few steps on the stairway.

Tilly needed no second urging. Despite her lame arm, the Vermont country girl was standing poised shakily on the big patrolman's vast bulk of shoulder almost before he had finished speaking.

Her own shoulders were a few inches above the sill. Tilly threw up the sash and McAnerny gave her a boosting toss as she leaped inside quite as handily as she had often swung into apple trees on her father's farm. The air inside was thick with smoke and dark as the pit of Erebus, yet Tilly found her way to the iron fire door and threw back the bar that held it closed, permitting McAnerny to enter.

"Good girrul, you're provin' yourself no crook; I'll take another chance," declared the officer as he brought out his pocket flashlight and started along toward the direction from whence came sounds of a violent struggle.

"Keep close behint me now and have that night stick handy," cautioned McAnerny as he shot the gleam of his flash ahead to where he saw two men struggling with a third. They were so thoroughly mixed up in the fight that he could not tell whether one was Black or not, but he decided that none of them were armed and turned to Tilly as he cried:

"Here, take this flash and the Gat, girrul, and gimme the night stick; I can work bether with a long billy in this mess."

Grasping his night stick firmly, McAnerny gave one leap into the middle of the fracas, hitting heads right and left, as he called back to Tilly: "Keep the flash turned on, girrul, so's I can see who to baste."

Evidently McAnerny's "basting" was to good effect for, in less than a minute, all three of the strugglers were stretched senseless on the floor.

"Black's not here; they're all them dom foreigners," declared McAnerny. "But there's somethin' doin' in thet room at the end of the corridor where the smoke comes from. He may be in there. Come on, girrul!" And the two darted ahead, coming into the room littered with burning rags where Detective Black and the fourth brown man were engaged in their struggle.

"It's the rat-eyed one!" boomed McAnerny, with a gleeful shout as he kicked bits of burning carpet to right and left and brought his night stick down with a resounding whack on the skull of the brown man. "Take that, ye indacent scut! I bin waitin' six months ter hand it to yer and now you're moighty welcome."

Tilly's instincts were true; undersized Tom Black, lying smoke-choked and senseless on the floor, bore no resemblance whatever to the superman detective of nickel fiction, yet, somehow, Tilly Myers knew him. Grasping the insensible man by the shoulder, she began dragging his limp form along the corridor toward the door and the clear air of the outer stairway as she cried, brandishing the big police revolver rather shakily in her partly disabled hand:

"Stand back there, you red devils, an' let me through or I'll fill you as fuller holes as a pepper shaker!"

Glory! Despite the fact there were no red—or brown—devils in her pathway to "stand back," all those individuals having been knocked insensible by McAnerny, this moment was more rich with glory for Miss Matilda Myers, scrub girl, than the proudest hour of our gallant ex-President when he defied the danger zone of San Juan Hill.

XV

TILLY DISCOVERS "A REEL HERO"

"EASY there now, girrul," cried McAnerny as he saw Tilly attempting to drag Black's insensible form along the floor and out of danger from the burning rags. "Bether let me carry him; he may be seriously wounded and it's not in a comfortin' way you're pullin' him along there."

McAnerny reached down and lifted Black in his great arms as easily as he would a baby and strode toward the door to escape the flames that were now making some headway in the littered room. Tilly hurried along beside the patrolman, holding onto one of the detective's hands. Having once set her eyes on a sure enough detective, Tilly had no idea of losing sight of him now.

As they came down the outside iron stairway they heard the clang and clatter of the fire department coming up the Avenue. Some one had seen the smoke and turned in an alarm.

McAnerny laid his burden down on the sidewalk and glanced toward the second landing at the door where they had left the building. The smoke was now pouring from this door in dense volumes. Throwing off his coat and cap, the patrolman cried to Tilly as he dashed back up the stairs:

"Thim dom foreigners is nawthin' but scum of the earth, but I must get thim out; it's me duty. Tell thim fire lads to turn the hose on me the minute I come

out of the door. I only wish they were here to wet me down before I go in."

Tilly kneeled on the sidewalk and lifted Detective Black's head in her lap as she gazed up and saw Officer McAnerny disappear in the smoke-choked doorway with a handkerchief wrapped about his mouth. He bent over and waved his arms before his face to beat back the smoke that he might see better.

The fire department was just swinging into action when McAnerny came staggering back. He was dragging two slight, brown-skinned forms in his arms; these he dropped to where they rolled helter-skelter down the stairway, lying limp and senseless at the bottom; then he dashed back into the corridor. McAnerny was gone but a second this time when he reappeared with Ramchutta, the big Sikh.

Deputy Chief Murray of the fire department and Acting Captain Rorgan of the Second Avenue Station came running around the corner of the building just in time to see McAnerny gulping for breath as he leaned down before going back once into the burning building. McAnerny's clothes were smoldering in a dozen places and he reeled like a drunken man.

"Here you," roared Chief Murray above the clang of arriving hook and ladder trucks and the steady beat of pulsing engines. "Don't go back in there without a smoke helmet; you'll never come out alive if you do. Wait, I say."

"I've no time to bother waitin' for smoke helmuts," shouted McAnerny. "There's just wan more in here, the rat-eyed feller. I must get him quick or the fire will." And he darted out of sight inside the doorway.

"Blame fool," howled the Deputy Chief in Captain Rorgan's ear. "If the last one is like this dirty riffraff he's already dumped out here they're scarcely worth losing a good patrolman like that for."

Tilly sat with Black's head in her lap and with a perfect pandemonium of roaring sound beating in her ears; men stumbled over her and the form she nursed; snaky fire hose circled about her feet and the hoofs of running horses came within a few inches of her head, yet she was neither frightened nor confused. Had she arranged the scene herself it could not have been more to her liking; nothing was lacking, not even the glare of red fire, for the flames were now breaking through the front windows of the building.

Only Tilly's heart wavered, for although she was holding the head of an insensible real detective in her lap while a fire department doctor tried to revive him, she was not unimpressed by the gallant conduct of plain Patrolman McAnerny, who had three times risked his own life to save the lives of men who, but a few moments before, he had been engaged in gleefully beating into insensibility. Such actual self forgetfulness and simple heroism rather overshadowed anything that her favorite Old Slouch had ever narrated in regard to his detective heroes.

Her soul thus filled with admiration for McAnerny, Tilly actually forgot her detective as she stood up, clasped both hands and cried as she saw two firemen in smoke helmets dash in after the patrolman:

"Oh, I do hope he comes out! I *hope* he comes out!"

Officer McAnerny came out; but it was rather a wreck of a policeman that did come. Gone was the gallant red mustache; even the red hair and eyebrows were singed close to the flesh and the big hands more resembled sections of raw beef than they did human members, yet, tender as those hands must have been, they never released their hold of the rat-eyed man whom McAnerny dragged behind him as he himself was helped out by the two firemen in smoke helmets.

"There, yer scut, you're out, dom ye," declared McAnerny as he handed the rat-eyed man down the iron stairway and into the waiting arms of an ambulance surgeon, who had already taken the other brown men into his charge.

"Now come on yourself," shouted the surgeon as his helpers carried off the rat-eyed man on a stretcher. "You're worse used up than any of them; they're only insensible from smoke and the insufflator ought to bring them around in short order. You're burned. Come on now."

"I'll not," declared McAnerny, as he glanced at his superior, Captain Rorgan, and then sat on the bottom of the stairway, gasping for a full, deep breath. "Unless the Captain orders it I'll go to no horsepittle this night. Give me some oiled rags to twist about me hands and I'll be as good as ever, barrin' the fact that me face and head is shaved a bit too close for real comfort."

Acting Captain Rorgan, a grim, taciturn chap with the usual police captain's imperturbability, did not order it and McAnerny continued:

"Where's Black and the girrul?"

Tilly made her presence known by action before she gave expression to words. She threw her arms around the neck of portly Officer McAnerny as he sat there and planted a resounding smack on his scorched cheek as she cried:

"Aint you gorgeous! You're a reel hero, that's what you are, an' I'm darn glad I know you."

"Go easy there, Miss Old Slouch," cautioned McAnerny, as he winced beneath the warmth of Tilly's innocent caress, and an actual blush mantled his burnt cheeks. "I guess I'm gorgeous all right, by the way I feel, and thim jowls is mighty tender, just now. Have ye got the bag and where's Detective Black?"

Detective Black, who had recovered his senses and also refused the assistance of the ambulance surgeon, was lying close by with his head pillowed on a folded rubber coat some kindly fireman had tucked there without being in the least aware who the man was.

"There is Mr. Black and here is the bag," declared Tilly, holding out the latter toward the patrolman and pointing to the detective as he lay on the sidewalk.

"Well, by Juro! sure it *is* the bag!" exclaimed McAnery. "An' yer didn't skip, did yer? With all the chance yer had, too? You're straight goods, you are, girrul, even if you have got a batty idea you're Old Slouch. Come on over till we see Black," and they walked toward Black, McAnerny meanwhile explaining the state of affairs to Captain Rorgan.

XVI

TILLY ASSISTS AT IMPORTANT COUNSELS.

Black was fast regaining his proper condition in the cool outside air. He sat up, held out his hand and spoke warmly and huskily as the Captain, McAnerny and Tilly came up: "Put it there, Mac, old man; I guess 'twas you pulled me out of that scrape. There'll be a medal for Patrick G. McAnerny on police parade day if my word is worth anything."

"What talk have you?" bantered McAnerny. "I want no midals; I only did me duty accordin' to the book of instructions, and why should a man get midals for doin' what he's paid for doin'?"

"Probably because so few do what they *are* paid for doing," said Black with a smile. Then he looked with inquiring eyes toward Tilly and said: "Your daughter, Mac?"

"Daughter, nothin'; sure I'm not married," answerd the patrolman with a bashful grin. "'Twas the little girrul here did as much as myself to pull you out of that mess you were in up there. The Captain thinks we'd better explain all about this if yer feel right enough to listen a bit, Tom."

The fire, which had turned out to be more smoke than actual flames, was now well under control and the apparatus already beginning to get away. Two reporters who had come in with the hook and ladder trucks were buzzing around Rorgan, McAnerny and Black, listening to their conversation and attempting to break in.

The patrolman gave a wary glance towards these newsmongers as he assisted the detective to his feet, and added: "Come along into this oyster house here. I have a key to the front door— 'tis run by an inimate frind of mine— and we can talk there without any listeners. Come on, Miss Old Slouch, you're in on this."

Tilly followed the three members of the police force, shifting her gaze from one to the other and attempting to divide her admiration with strict impartiality. McAnerny, with his singed face, fire damaged uniform and hands wrapped in oil soaked rags, was not a

form of beauty, yet Tilly could not forget those three gallant dashes into the smoke-choked building and, despite the fact that Black was a real detective, her regard had rather leaned toward the patrolman. That she was now invited by this same person to share in important counsels tipped the scales totally in McAnerny's favor and, from that moment, Tilly Myer's heart had found permanent lodgment. She tucked one arm—the good one—trustfully within that of the big patrolman and strode along by his side. Had he led her even to the Tombs itself she would have gone happily now.

Inside the oyster house, McAnerny, after locking the door again to make certain there would be no intruders, turned on one light above a lunch table, drew out chairs for the others and sat down himself as he threw the bag on the table.

"There, Tom," he declared triumphantly. "Open that grip, there, and feast yer optics on what's inside ut."

Detective Black drew the bag toward him and snapped it open. Then he jumped to his feet in astonishment and cried: "Goshalmighty, Mac! how the merry Hades did you get hold of these? It's the Northurlund rubies!"

"So the little girrul here told me," declared McAnerny. "An' from her actions subsequent to that there statement I didn't think she lied." Then, turning to Tilly, he added: "Come now, Miss Old Slouch, take the flure and tell us your story. How did you come by that mess of jewelry?"

With some slight and excusable addition of lurid detail, unconsciously absorbed from her favorite literature, but with a careful adherence to the main facts, Tilly related all that had happened to her since she had started out the previous morning to wash the windows in the Northurlund billard room as per the careful instructions of Wattleson, the butler.

Tilly made it plainly evident, as she went on with her narrative, that it was Kunda the East Indian maid whom she thought had murdered Mr. Northurlund.

McAnerny kept his eyes fastened on Tilly as she talked, occasionally interrupting with admiring exclamations of: "By Juro! can you beat that now?" and "Ye're far bether than any Old Slouch that ever lived; you'd oughter be on the force, that yer had."

Black had also listened to the scrub girl's story, putting in a word now and then to refresh and stimulate her recollection of the details that fitted in with his own ideas of the crime.

"And you say you felt certain all the time that it was Kunda the maid you were following until you heard her voice?" asked Black as Tilly finished her story.

"Yes," answered Tilly. "It looked just like her in the face, but when she spoke I knew it was the mistress."

"And did you hear the woman speak while you were fighting with her in Mr. Northurlund's study?" inquired the detective sharply.

"No-o,"—rather dubiously from Tilly, who appeared now to be aware of where his questions were leading. "But I know it was Kunda; nobody except a pesky cat like her could do such a thing."

"I see," said Black. "You think it was Kunda because no other person you know could commit such a crime. And when you saw Mrs. Northurlund on the pier she was about to drop this bag of jewelry into the water?"

"I didn't say that," denied Tilly rather pettishly. "I said I thought it was Kunda and she was going to jump in with the bag herself. I wanted to get my hands on the bag before she jumped. I didn't think of her; I aint no hero."

"Doesn't matter," declared Black. "Either the bag of rubies or Mrs. Northurlund and the bag were going into the water. It settles the case in my mind; it was she killed her husband, and we have Mrs. Northurlund tied up in so many strings she couldn't untangle herself in a lifetime." Then, pulling out his watch, he added: "It's almost two o'clock. Captain Rorgan, can you not detail McAnerny to go up to the hospital and keep his eyes on those people that came from Number Nine-fifty-eight, especially that tall Sikh, Ramchutta Sundey; he may be an important link in this case?"

Upon the Captain's agreeing to this plan Black added: "Mac can leave his report with the desk sergeant on his way. I'm going direct to headquarters now and I'll have Commissioner Connolly send another man up to the hospital. Call me up on the 'phone as soon as they are able to talk, Mac. If he can't get me he'd better bring the whole bunch down to headquarters without delay, hadn't he, Captain?"

"I will that," assented McAnerny in response to Rorgan's nod. "I'll attend to it meself, an' you can wager none of thim'll get out of my sight afther I reach the detintion ward of Bilervue."

"I'll take this bag and the girl with me," said Black as he got up to leave. "Mrs. Northurlund is coming to headquarters this morning and I want this little miss to be there too. So long, Mac. So long, Captain."

Tilly gave a rueful glance behind at the much damaged patrolman, who was going off with his captain, as she prepared to depart with Black. Having found her hero she disliked to be separated from him quite so summarily.

"Good-by, Officer," said Tilly with a rather shaky voice. "I hope you get your medal, and I hope it's a whopping big one, too."

McAnerny caught the quiver in Tilly's voice and, perhaps, had a faint hint of what caused it; anyway, he winked one of those fine eyes of his most roguishly—and painfully, too, it is feared—as he declared:

"Go 'long with you, girrul; I'm thinkin' there's others ought to be gittin' midals, too. I have me eye on *you,* Miss Old Slouch. I'll be speakin' with you again before long."

XVII

THE WHINING PUPPY

Detective Black and Tilly, after leaving the site of the fire on Avenue A, and seeing Patrolman McAnerny started toward Bellevue Hospital, hurried across to Central Park Plaza in search of a cab to take them to police headquarters.

In the shadow of the Sherman monument Black had the good fortune to find a sea-going vehicle of ancient appearance that had probably been without a fare all night and so had not yet turned in. The cabby agreed to get them to police headquarters in short order "for wan fare, considerin' the little girl," as he put it.

Despite the strenuous hours through which Tilly Myers had passed since the previous morning she was neither sleepy nor tired. Interesting developments were following one another too rapidly for so faithful a disciple of Old Slouch to become fatigued. The excitement of the moment had even made her forget her wounded shoulder and she sat primly and proudly beside Black as they rode down Fifth Avenue, her eyes sparkling as she thought how the farm folks back home would stare could they see her now, hobnobbing so familiarly with a real detective.

Tilly, as has been previously mentioned, was not bashful, and the fact that Patrolman McAnerny and Detective Black had talked freely before her, during their conference at the oyster house on Avenue A, emboldened her now to give expression to an idea that had been buzzing in her busy little brain ever since she heard Black declare that he was certain Mrs. Northurlund had really been the person with whom Tilly had the fight in her master's study on the day before.

Detective Black, feeling rather worn and sleepy himself, it must be confessed, was leaning back in one corner of the cab with closed eyes when Tilly glanced up into his face and naïvely inquired:

"Aint you goin' to git that maid Kunda, Mr. Black? Seems to me she might tell you a whole lot about the mistress, and, if it really was Mrs. Northurlund that killed the master, as you think, Kunda may know something about that, too. She is her maid and has a room right next to Mrs. Northurlund, you know."

Black opened his eyes and stared rather sleepily at Tilly, as if wondering where this odd appearing little girl had dropped from, before he straightened up and spoke, half to himself:

"Not a bad idea, especially if we have

an opportunity to question the maid before Mrs. Northurlund comes to police headquarters. But it will be necessary to get Kunda out of the house without her mistress being aware of the fact."

"I can fix that," declared Tilly. "Kunda goes out often at night. I've watched her. Somebody comes to the delivery entrance and barks low three times, like a little puppy, and then Kunda sneaks out. I slep' in a little room off the kitchen and I've seen her, many a night."

"That's funny, too," mused Black. "And you think if we go to the delivery entrance of the Northurlund house now and make the signal she will come out?"

"I know she will," answered Tilly with a dry chuckle. "I've fooled her twict that way a'ready."

"We'll try it," said Black, and he leaned forward and rapped smartly with his knuckles on the glass window back of the cabby's seat.

"Turn around and drive back to Fifth Avenue and Sixty-eighth Street," ordered Black as the cab came to a shaky halt and the driver opened the door.

"You'll pay another full fare for both if I do," growled the cabby truculently. "I'll not be twistin' and turnin' about the city like that at this hour of the night for wan fare."

"You'll do exactly what I say, and without grunting over it, too," snapped Black, flapping back the lapel of his coat as he spoke.

"Sure I will," apologetically declared the cabby, touching the greasy rim of his hat with a dirty index finger. "Why didn't yer say what the business was in the first place? I'll be there in two seconds."

At the Sixty-eighth Street corner, Black gave precise instructions to the cabby to remain on that exact spot with the sidewalk door of his vehicle held open. "We'll be likely to have another passenger when we come back," declared Black softly as he and Tilly stepped from the cab. "And she may not be over-anxious to ride with you."

It was getting close on toward three o'clock now, and the Avenue was dark and still. Black first made sure that there was no patrolman handy to interfere with his plans; then he and Tilly went around to the delivery entrance of the Northurlund home.

A high iron fence encircled the house with a barred gate at the back where supplies for the housekeeping were taken in. Black stood in a dense shadow opposite this gate while Tilly crouched close down at one side and gave three slow, querulous barks, such as might have been uttered by some lonely puppy who found the night long and wakeful. It was a penetrating sound that would carry far on a still night like this.

For five minutes they waited there while nothing happened, and Black was beginning to consider himself a fool for listening to the plan of this queer little girl with the odd ways and the multiplicity of freckles, when Tilly again sounded her call.

This time the third whining protest had hardly left Tilly's lips when the rear door of the Northurlund home was opened and a woman, so closely wrapped in a dark garment that only her shining eyes were visible, stepped out and walked toward the iron gate.

"Is it thou, O my brother?" she whispered softly in Hindustani.

Black stirred in the shadow that Kunda might know where he was.

Apparently unaware of the deception that was being practiced upon her, Kunda stepped across toward the spot where Black stood. The detective was preparing to reach out both arms to grasp the maid's form when he saw the drapery above her right hand cast quickly to one side, saw the arm shoot out with a deft casting movement and dodged back just as a shining knife shot past his throat so close his ear even caught the soft twang of the keen blade as it cut the air in its progress.

The knife struck the stone post behind Black and fell to the walk with a metallic tinkle as he saw Kunda dart back toward the iron gate and heard her angrily whisper:

"You leetle scrub cat—you peeg! You theeng you can fool Kunda again, eh? I keel you the negst time, you—"

Kunda had not been aware that there were two people instead of one await-

ing her outside the gate and had proceeded no farther in her torrent of invective when a form darted toward the maid and bore her to the ground, so tangled in the wrap she had thrown about her before coming from the house that Kunda could neither cry out nor untangle herself to fight.

"I've got her," shrilled Tilly as she worked with feet, arms and fingers sprawled out to prevent Kunda from either disentangling herself from the voluminous wrap or arising to her feet.

"That's her arms there," added Tilly excitedly as she indicated a writhing point in the huddled form where the movement was most vigorous.

Black applied his twisters to Kunda's wrists with good effect while he wound the cloak more securely about her face to prevent her from crying out and bringing unwelcome spectators to the spot. Then he lifted her form in his arms as he said to Tilly:

"Come on now, girl; we'll soon have her in the cab. Hope we haven't awakened anyone on the street."

Black and Tilly reached the cab on the corner without opposition and the detective dumped Kunda's huddled form inside, pushed Tilly after her and sprang in himself as he cried to the astonished old cab driver:

"Get us to headquarters now as quick as you can."

As the cab rattled along down town Black unwound the cloak from about Kunda's face and poked his automatic toward her as he said:

"I'll not harm you if you keep quiet and behave. We are going to police headquarters and I want you to tell me what you know about Mrs. Northurlund, your mistress. You are her personal maid, aren't you? and are with her through a great part of the time when she is at home?"

Black could see Kunda's handsome eyes glitter like burning coals at his question; below them her mouth set itself into a tight, thin line. He repeated his interrogation in Hindustani, yet the maid gave no reply. Twice she attempted to spring toward Tilly and he was obliged to give a vigorous turn to his twisters to make her desist; but of complaint or information there was no more to be got out of Kunda than as if she had been deaf and dumb, and Black soon gave up the attempt.

XVIII

AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS AGAIN

AT NINE-THIRTY o'clock on Tuesday morning, Detective Tom Black was just finishing his report to Second Deputy Commissioner Connolly regarding the Northurlund murder and the stirring events of the night before at Nine-fifty-eight Avenue A. A heavy tread came along the corridor and a grizzled old patrolman on house duty, who walked as if he had bricks instead of feet in his shoes, interrupted their conversation by sticking his head inside Connolly's office door and hoarsely whispering out one corner of his white-mustache-shaded mouth:

"There's a leddy below wants to see the Sic'nd Dipty Commishner. Come in an importhed car. Rafuses to give her name; but says she was sint for. What'll I do with her?"

"Mrs. Northurlund," said Connolly nervously without looking around. "Hold her there, Driscoll, until I ring; then bring her up here."

"Righto," croaked Driscoll, as he clumped off down the hall again.

"Now hurry on with your story," said Connolly, fiddling with his watch chain.

"That's about all," declared Black. "I'm perfectly satisfied Mrs. Northurlund killed her husband. We have circumstantial evidence enough to that effect, but no real motive has come to the surface yet. The servant girl, Myers, declares she saw the maid Kunda do it, but Myers' story weakens under the fact that she could not distinguish mistress from maid when she saw them pass through Mrs. Northurlund's chamber not two minutes apart. I have this Kunda in the back room there, got her early this morning; but she is dumb as an oyster; I can't get a syllable out of her and I've been working on her for an hour. I think it may clear up the whole thing if we have Mrs. Northurlund in and let her know, by slow degrees, what we know. She is a very

emotional woman and ought to break down easy."

"All right," assented Connolly, fidgeting in his chair. "How will we carry it off?"

"I think I'd better take her rather easy, at first, and work on her emotional side, leaving an opening occasionally for you to hammer home a fact that will tend to break her down."

The day was warm, yet Connolly closed all the windows and turned on the steam in both radiators before he pressed the button on his desk that would signal to Driscoll. Both men turned toward the door and waited.

Ordinarily Second Deputy Commissioner Connolly was a courteous, affable man; yet, when deep in a case, he had a habit of smashing one big fist into the palm of the other hand and blurting out a covertly concealed accusation in a cold, hard, sneering manner that, to a person in the remotest degree sensitive, was more cutting than a blow in the face.

Time after time, this trump card of the big commissioner had caught his victim unawares and brought an unwilling confession bubbling to some man's lips before the keen brain could stifle it. A score of desperate criminals, whose cases lacked evidence enough to convict, could lay their sojourn at Sing Sing to this ability of Connolly to play on the psychological weakness that lurks in all human beings, the innate desire of the brain to tell of things as they are, rather than as deceit and cunning dictate.

It must also be stated that this faculty of Connolly's had, more than once, produced a confession of guilt from people actually proved innocent by later developments. The same strange psychological condition that involuntarily produces the truth from a startled conscience, is also capable of leading a bewildered mind along the very channels desired by the clearer-headed and stronger questioner, causing the accused to give voice to a confession that is really nothing but a tissue of lies born in and communicated entirely from the brain of the questioner himself.

Driscoll's heavy feet thumped along the corridor like some one hammering on a hollow barrel; the door opened and an expensively dressed, heavily veiled woman glided, rather than walked into Connolly's office.

The woman threw back her crêpe veil and the black frame thus made for her face rendered almost ghostly the striking pallor of her olive skin. Constance Northurlund was still a remarkably beautiful woman, yet her red-rimmed eyes and drawn cheeks told the story of a night of horror and a mind that must have recently plumbed anxiety to its farthermost depth. The tears seemed even now but just beneath her lids and her taper fingers were tremulous with emotion.

XIX

THIRTY MINUTES OF THIRD DEGREE

Black rose courteously to his feet and held a chair toward Mrs. Northurlund as he bowed and spoke in a low, deferential tone:

"I am deeply sorry, Mrs. Northurlund, to call upon you again; but there are several new developments in this sad case of your husband's death that it seemed you alone could help us out on."

Connolly did not even rise from his chair. He sat, like a huge, fat, unhealthy spider, with hard eyes, tight-drawn mouth and pulsing nostrils, as if waiting for the fly to enter his web.

Mrs. Northurlund apparently did not note Connolly's obvious slight in not arising as she entered. She fell into a chair and began to fold and refold one corner of her veil in two nervous hands as she spoke:

"As I explained to you last night, Officer, I am only too glad to be of any assistance that I may. Nothing any of us can do will bring Embleton back, yet I suppose it is our duty to see that those who have—who have been responsible for his death are—are punished." Her voice, at first finely modulated and strong, trailed off into a whisper.

"Why, of course, Madam, we know all about that," harshly put in Connolly, who had been studying the woman intently as she spoke. "We both want to get facts."

For the first time Mrs. Northurlund appeared to be aware of the commissioner's presence in the room. She turned toward him and nodded with the faint smile of good breeding as she softly murmured:

"Yes, of course."

Connolly met Mrs. Northurlund's glance with a coarse, hard stare, not even returning her nod, and she turned from him to Black with a little perplexed frown, as if a bit puzzled by the striking difference in the attitude of the two men.

"Mrs. Northurlund," said Black, who had waited for Connolly's remark and manner to gain its fullest effect. "I should like to know, first: what has become of the jewels you wore on the opening night of the season at the Metropolitan Opera House?"

Constance Northurlund's startled appearance as she began to arise to her feet and then sank back again, indicated that this question was an entirely unexpected one.

"I—I do not know; they have strangely disappeared," she stammered.

"And have you reported this disappearance to the proper authorities?" inquired Black in the smoothest of tones.

"Not yet; it was but last night I missed them," said Mrs. Northurlund, in a measure regaining her composure under the easy manner of Black. "I probably should have done so this morning."

"Now look here, Madam," said Connolly, drawing back one fat fist and blurting out his words as if they were something foul he had unintentionally taken into his mouth, "we know where that jewelry is. Why the devil did you try to throw it into the East River? What?"

The commissioner's last word was fairly roared out as he half arose and banged home one fist to its mate with a sound like a pistol shot.

The room was becoming fearfully warm. Every vestige of color had left Mrs. Northurlund's lips and she seemed on the verge of fainting, yet Connolly's question could scarcely have influenced her more had that clenched fist of his struck her fair between the eyes. She put up both arms as if to shield her face and whimpered, shudderingly, like a punished child as she burst into a flood of tears and cried:

"I don't know. Oh, I *don't* know, what I did or why," and she gazed about her as if bewildered and wondering where she was.

Connolly felt certain the woman was breaking and hoped to bring her to the vital point before she had an opportunity to regain her composure.

"Bring in that kid, and that bag of jewelry," he roared to Black as he jumped to his feet and strode toward Mrs. Northurlund, drawing back that gigantic fist again and spreading open his other hand ready to meet it. "Look here," he barked, thrusting open his under jaw and stopping a few paces from her with spread arms. "You see that kid there? An' this bag? Well, what now?"

The perspiration was pouring in streams from Connolly's face and he glared into Mrs. Northurlund's wavering eyes as if he were fairly beating her bewildered brain into uttering the words he wished her to speak.

"What now, eh?" he roared again insistently.

Mrs. Northurlund merely turned her head from side to side. Her eyes wandered in confusion from Tilly to the bag, from the black bag to Connolly's cruel face, then down to the corner of the crêpe veil she was turning into interminable folds between finger and finger.

The room was like an oven. Save for Connolly's panting breath that hissed out above his undershot jaw it was quiet as the grave.

"Not enough, eh?" he sneered as he strode a step nearer, his blazing eyes never leaving hers, his fist crashing out an emphasis on every important word as he continued: "Then how about the ruby from your ear-drop that we found in the bath beneath your husband's body?"

No answer; nothing but that ceaseless moving of the head from side to side, that weaving of white fingers back and forth through the mesh of crêpe veil, as if she were indeed weaving a shroud for some dead body.

Connolly waited but a moment this—

time and then his whole form seemed to hover threateningly above the tortured woman as he bent down and barked the words into her ear:

"How about that jewelry of the Maharaja of Kaphortana that you and your husband ripped up and had re-set? Aha, I thought that would get you," he snarled as Mrs. Northurlund's fingers stopped their restless movement and she looked her heckler fair in the eyes. "Now look here," he continued, bringing down one fist into his palm with a mighty crash, not two inches before her face: "Why did you kill your husband up in his study yesterday morning?"

Connolly drew back his out-thrust jaw like a rattlesnake that had delivered its death-blow.

Constance Northurlund gave one shuddering, hurt intake of breath and then spoke, softly and quietly, like a questioning child, as she held one folded hand to her quivering chin:

"Did I kill him? I don't know why I did. I must have been insane."

"It's enough," whistled Connolly through set jaws with deep satisfaction, as he dropped back into a chair, limp as a wet rag. "I knew we'd get her." His telephone bell began jangling furiously. "Black, answer that 'phone," he ordered.

Black darted for the telephone booth. Constance Northurlund continued to gaze toward her accuser for one bewildered instant and then wavered on her chair, closed her eyes and fell forward. Tilly sprang toward her mistress and caught her form in her arms just in time to prevent the head from striking the floor.

"There! there! my poor, dear mistress," she murmured consolingly. "I don't care what they say, I don't believe you ever killed anybody. Just you wait, Miss Old Slouch is still on this case."

XX

PATRICK G. M'ANERNY ON DECK

THE instant Connolly saw Mrs. Northurlund topple fainting from her chair his brutish demeanor was cast aside like a despised garment. He took her form tenderly from Tilly's arms and carried it toward the couch in a near-by alcove, muttering to himself:

"It's a devil of a business, to browbeat a woman like that; but it's all in the day's work. God! if they only knew how I hate to do it!" Then, turning back to Tilly, he ordered:

"Run down to the first floor and bring up the matron, Mrs. Scott, as fast as God will let your feet fly."

"It's only a slight faint," explained Connolly as Mrs. Scott came hurrying in. "Mrs. Embleton Northurlund—I think she is recovering already."

He threw up a window, drew the curtains across the alcove, hiding Mrs. Scott and her charge, and was shutting off the steam in the radiators when Black came out of the telephone booth.

"What is it, Tom?" he inquired wearily, mopping his face.

"An entirely new turn of affairs," declared Black with puzzled frown. "Two of those fellows from Number Nine-fifty-eight that were taken up to Bellevue Hospital have croaked, and McAnerny is coming down here with the other two. He says one of the chaps that died made an important anti-mortem statement regarding this case. They cut us off before he could add anything more, and he had left the hospital before I could get connected again. Mac ought to be here in a few moments."

As Black came from the booth Tilly Myers had stepped toward him as if to speak. She waited with eager, staring eyes until the detective had answered Connolly's question; then she spoke:

"Mr. Black, I don't care what my mistress said, I don't believe she killed Mr. Northurlund; in fact, I'm sure she didn't, and I know how we can tell whether I'm right or not, too."

"Are you sure?" said Black kindly. "What makes you so certain, and how can we tell?"

"When I was fightin' with that woman up in Mr. Northurlund's study, before she stabbed me, I dug my nails into her flesh somethin' awful, just as I told you, to keep her from stabbin' me with that knife. If you'll bring Kunda in here I think you'll find her arms all scratched up worse'n if she'd fit 'Deuteronomy,' our old yellow tomcat."

Black looked questioningly toward Connolly with a tolerant smile.

"Sure, bring her in and see. If the marks are not on one they will be on the other and it's an important link in the evidence," nodded Connolly.

Kunda was brought in, dressed now only in her winding native garment of light blue silk. She trod softly and daintily. An obvious sneer was in her eyes and yet both Black and Connolly could not help but be struck by the strong facial resemblance between Mrs. Northurlund and the handsome-featured maid.

For an instant Kunda scorned to look about her; then her eyes turned slowly and she saw Tilly. The maid gave one angry scream and tried to break away from Officer Driscoll, who had brought her in, as she cried:

"What, you 'ere, too, you leetle scrub cat!"

Tilly stepped eagerly forward and attempted to draw up the blue silk drapery that hid one arm, despite the frantic efforts of Kunda to fasten her clenched fingers on the scrub girl's throat.

Driscoll caught both of Kunda's wrists in his firm grasp as he cautioned her: "Be aisy there; ye're in the prisence of dacent people and ye must thry to act like a leddy—if ye can."

Tilly now lifted the drapery of Kunda's dress, baring the warm olive skin of one arm to the shoulder. From shoulder to elbow the flesh was scarred with deep, recently made scratches. Kunda was dragged shrieking from the room.

"By George!" exploded Connolly. "It's dam funny; what?" Then he turned toward the curtains of the alcove that hid Mrs. Scott and her charge as he cried: "Mrs. Scott, look at Mrs. Northurlund's arms and see if they are scarred above the elbows."

"There is no sign of a scar or scratch on either arm; the skin is as clear as a baby's," answered Mrs. Scott. Tilly tossed her head in triumph.

"See here, my little snippet," roared Connolly, working himself into a rage and turning his batteries on Tilly, as if she were alone to blame for the entire affair. "Did you know the maid had scratches on her arms? And are you trying to clear your mistress in this manner; what?"

The big fist of Second Deputy Commissioner Connolly was again at it, hammer and anvil, but it happened to be Tilly Myers he was talking to this time instead of Constance Northurlund. Fear of anything human was a condition of mind with which Matilda Myers had never made acquaintance.

"Don't snap at me like a pug dog," cried Tilly defiantly. "An' don't you call me a 'snippet.' You can't scare me a bit. *I'm* not tryin' to do nothin' but find out the truth." There was marked emphasis on the first word of Tilly's parting sentence.

Detective Black found it difficult to repress a smile as Connolly sank helplessly into a chair, turned toward him and said:

"We'll have to get more evidence against the maid than this, Tom, to weaken that woman's confession in my mind."

"You'd better believe what I say," declared Tilly, striding toward Connolly's chair with something of the same pugnacious attitude the commissioner himself had found so effective with Mrs. Northurlund. "I told you the truth and I'll take my oath on it. It was the maid done it."

"That's the facts, Miss Old Slouch," boomed a jovial voice in the doorway as Patrolman Patrick G. McAnerny stepped inside with one arm linked in that of Ramchutta Sundey, and the other handcuffed to a slightly built Hindoo youth.

XXI

THE RIGHT AT LAST

"EXCUSE me fer breakin' in on you this way, Commissioner," said McAnerny, "but Tom tould me to make no delays and I knew 'twas extra important that I see you both at wanst."

"Well, what is it, McAnerny?" inquired the usually keen-minded Connolly, who acted now rather as if he had been driven into a maze and scarcely knew where to turn.

"'Tis enough, God knows," answered McAnerny. "The rat-eyed feller is

dead; so is one of the others; but before the rat-eyed one died he made an ante-mortem statement implicating this dom blackbird here"—the patrolman shook the handcuff that held him to the under-sized youth—"who is named Ranam Singh, an' was Mr. Northurlund's valet, in the murder of that sicretary of the Indian prince at the Plazara Hotel a few months ago."

"How the devil did you ever manage to get a confession from him, Mac?" Black blurted out in amazement.

"'Twas aisy," answered McAnerny. "He turned out to be a half dacent sort of a feller—whin he was goin' to croak—and he made the confession as a personal favor to me for draggin' him out of that building; it seems thim Hindoos has a horror of dyin' by fire. Besides, this big feller here,"—McAnerny pointed to Ramchutta Sundey, who stood at military attention to one side,—"who has bin in the English army and is a Christian, had already told me something about the same thing. You see, thim other three scuts, an' two women, belonged to some sort of a sacret society that was thryin' to steal enough money to free India from the English and the native princes.

"Now they thought their plans would be extra successful if they cut the heart out of every one of their victims and squeezed the blood from ut over any money or jewels they stole. This here Ramchutta Sundey, bein' a Christian, was ag'in' their plans. He tells me he wint to the 'great American hotel,' as he calls it, with the little feller, and tried to stop him from committin' the crime, but couldn't make a go of it. Thin, he says, he wrote a letther to you, Black, but as he got no answer, and the others had him pretty well bound up, he did no more. It's all explained in this here ante-morthem, properly signed by meself, patrolman Callihan, two surgeons an' a nothary," finished the patrolman, handing a folded paper to Connolly.

"That clears the ruby case," said Connolly. "But what has all this to do with the Northurlund murder?"

"I came near forgettin' ut," answered McAnerny. "That matter, too, is sittled in the ante-morthem. It happened just as Miss Old Slouch, there"—here the patrolman favored the admiring Tilly with a solemn wink—"told me an' Cap'n Rorgan an' Tom Black last night over on Av'ner A; the maid of Mrs. Northurlund, who is married to Ranam Singh, this blackbird perched on me arrum here, turned that dirthy trick. They had it all planned that her husband here, the valet, was to git a day off and she was to put on his clothes and kill the master for the jewelry they knew he kep' up in the study there. If anywan saw her they'd think it was the valet, but he, the decavin' rascal, havin' his day off, could easy prove an alibi.

"She knifed poor Northurlund up in his study; then she watched her chance, whin the hallways was clear, and took his body down to the bathroom, where she knew she'd have a fine place to dig his hearrut out, the crool jade. The rat-eyed feller was hangin' around outside the house that mornin' to git the hearrut. She handed ut out to him wrapped up in poor Northurlund's clothes and he took the bundle over to his dirthy diggin's on Av'ner A to squeeze ut over a lot of rubies that was also in the bundle. 'Twas a loathsome business all around; ut nearly made me sick to hear him tell ut."

"Good work, Mac," said Connolly as the patrolman finished his story. "I'll see that you get a place on the plain clothes force for this. Helping to straighten out our two biggest cases and making five fire rescues in one day is some record for one little patrolman, believe me." And he patted the big officer fondly on the shoulder.

"What talk have you, Commissioner?" protested McAnerny bashfully, blushing to the very apex of his fire singed head. "'Twas nawthin' at all. Anyway, Miss Old Slouch deserves far more credit than I do; 'tis a smart girrul like her, now, that'd be worth somethin' on the plain clothes force. Have ye no place for her, Commissioner?" And he favored Tilly with another of those jolly and cheering winks of his.

"We'll see, we'll see," smiled Connolly. "Perhaps we may find a case now and then where your little friend can be useful, if she likes that sort of work. Just now, however, I think she had

better go home with her mistress and look after that lame shoulder of hers. She has had a rather strenuous twenty-four hours of it."

"Huh," protested Tilly, who has listened to the commissioner's words in delighted wonder. "That stabbed shoulder aint nawthin'. I'd forgotten I had it until you brought it to my mind."

"You will see that the curry chef is held as a corroborative witness," said Connolly to Black as McAnerny left the office with the valet Ranam Singh. "I think that this anti-mortem, and what the little girl can swear to, makes out a complete case. The only thing that puzzles me now is that ruby in the bath and why did Mrs. Northurlund try to sink that bag of jewelry in the East River. I can easily see how she might have told me what she did about committing the murder when I had her all fussed up there; but why this secretiveness about the rubies? She might—"

A soft-spoken protest from behind the alcove curtains interrupted Connolly's remarks, and Constance Northurlund stepped out, walking slowly on the arm of Mrs. Scott.

"I can explain that, Commissioner," said Mrs. Northurlund. "I should have told you before. It was foolish of me to try and conceal the matter; but my husband himself made those rubies I wore at the opening night of the opera, as well as those that were stolen when he was killed. Knowing my great love for the gems, and desiring that mine should be the most beautiful possible, Embleton fitted up his laboratory with apparatus for making synthetic rubies by the Verneuil process. The gems my husband produced were, of course, as real and perfect as any, and much finer than any mine rubies, yet I disliked to have it known that they were the product of a laboratory. It was foolish pride, as I realize now. After his death I never wanted to see the jewelry again and tried to hide it forever in the river. It was because of this apparatus for making rubies being in the room that I refused to allow Officer Black access to the study last night. As for that ruby in the bath, I knew I lost it in the plunge room somewhere, early in the morning, but could not discover it at the time; it must have caught in the loofa and fallen out later."

The moment Mrs. Northurlund stepped from between his alcove curtains Connolly had leaped to his feet, bowed courteously and assisted her to a chair. As she finished speaking he burst into stammering apologies:

"Mrs. Northurlund, I—I owe you a thousand apologies for my brutal treatment a short time ago. I did not have the remotest idea of the real truth of the matter."

"Not another word, Commissioner," said Mrs. Northurlund, smiling faintly, and holding out her hand as she arose to go. "I was dazed and overwrought. I scarcely know now what I did, or said. I do not even remember what you said to me, save that you went at me hammer and tongs, and I admire you for it. You were but doing your duty in trying to discover my husband's murderer and no person deserves censure who faithfully does his duty. Your matron has promised to see me to my home, and I feel so ill I must go at once. Good-by, Mr. Black. Good-by, Commissioner. Come, Myers, we will go now."

"By George! A thoroughbred—a thoroughbred, by George!" exclaimed the Second Deputy Commissioner heartily as he gazed after the departing Constance Northurlund with admiring eyes and then looked wonderingly down at that fat, ominous fist of his, as if he thought it couldn't possibly be his own hand she had just shaken so warmly in farewell.

The Last Victoria

Strange, unexpected, and often trifling forces sometimes are responsible for important events—as witness this appealing little tale of an old darky who saved a state from the crookedness of its law-makers.

By EDWARD BOLTWOOD

IN the shade of an elm in State House Square, Decatur Jefferson Fish was carefully brushing the dust from the seat-cushions of his ancient victoria. The cushions were covered with a rusty, plum-colored cloth, and the old man's livery was a match to it, having been faded by the stress of many years to the same dismal hue. Beside the pole of the carriage, Neb and Chad, the two fat roans, switched their well-combed tails languidly. They had little else to do, nowadays.

The gray-haired negro whistled "Juanita," while he dusted the cushions. He always whistled "Juanita" or "The Arkansaw Traveler" on such occasions. The young chauffeurs of the taxi-cabs and private cars, stationed across the mall, used to joke about it.

"Deke's tuning up again," they would say. "If the old fellow don't take a rest, he'll brush the last victoria in the city clean out o' sight."

Decatur, indeed, brushed off his victoria, when there was not the slightest need of doing so. He detested even the appearance of idleness. His son, Lee Davis, head porter of the palatial Hotel Olympic, had often offered to support him, but the father declined with emphasis.

"No, chile," said Decatur. "Long ez mah ole victo-yer kin last, so kin I. When she bus' up, then Ah bus' up. Ah'll gua'ntee that!"

This afternoon, Decatur replaced his brush regretfully underneath the box-seat, took out a clean towel, and limped to the memorial fountain, where he washed his gnarled black hands. Then he curled the lash of his whip around its shaft and stood at ceremonious attention on the curb.

A new legislature was in session today for the first time. Decatur looked wistfully toward the State House, and reflected that there would be the usual first session crowd. Perhaps he might possibly obtain a fare, after the taxies were filled. He had not had one since last week, when he conveyed a timid pair of country excursionists to the cemetery. The young chauffeurs across the mall had derisively cheered him, as he drove away.

His patient eyes wandered to the velvety lawn of the park, which lay between the State House and the noisy street of the Western city. A daily contemplation for forty years had made Decatur almost as proud of the park as he was of his beloved victoria. He liked to indicate the beauties of the park to

visitors. It contained statues of several of the state's distinguished sons—the great chief-justice, and the sturdy reform-governor, and the young colonel who fell in Louisiana at the head of his black regiment. Decatur felt that he knew the statues personally.

The breeze had blown a discarded newspaper against the railing which surrounded Judge Arnold's monument, near by; and Decatur hastened to remove it. A four-column scare-head adorned its front page.

"Graft!" and, in smaller type, "Trolley Trust Lobby in Business at State House! Gus Nack on Deck!"

Decatur, with an angry scowl, flung the paper violently into a refuse-can. He was proud, too, of the state, and of her fame and honor. Street gossip of legislative crookedness filled him with disgust. He could not remember that he had heard such a thing ordinarily talked about in the old days.

Suddenly, like eager beasts, the engines of the taxies across the mall snorted sharply into action. Decatur looked around. The broad steps of the capitol were dotted with descending groups; it was evident that the session had been adjourned. He hopefully limped back to his carriage and stood waiting; but, as usual, he waited in vain.

The motor-cabs and the private cars whirred away with their passengers. A certain air of festivity marked the scene. Several of the legislators carried flowers, which had been sent to their desks to celebrate the new session; and wives and daughters, brightly dressed, were with some of them. Decatur recognized Arnold, the lieutenant-governor, in his limousine, with a gay party of ladies and gentlemen. Many a time had young Decatur, then the favorite hackman in the park, proudly driven for his father, the chief justice. Mr. Arnold waved his hand at Decatur, as the limousine glided by, and pointed out the veteran negro to a girl, and said something to her about him, which made her laugh. Decatur doffed his antiquated silk hat and smiled bravely. He remembered when he used to carry the lieutenant-governor in his arms.

At length there seemed to be nobody left on the deserted street to wave or laugh at Decatur. Two things remained for him to do. He might brush off the cushions again, or he might feed the pigeons, for which task he always carried a little bag of corn under the box-seat. He was rummaging for the corn, when he heard a stranger's voice behind him. The caressing quality of the voice made him turn with an odd jerk, as if pulled by a wire.

"Bless my soul!" drawled the stranger. "Your ca'aige, uncle?"

Beaming genially at the victoria, he halted on the sidewalk. He was a slim, elderly gentleman, with a smoothly shaven and almost boyish face. He wore a broad-brimmed, soft hat, and a long, dark, double-breasted coat, showing an expanse of snowy shirt-front.

"Bless my soul!" he repeated. "That's the only ca'aige in this city I've seen yet that's fit to ride in!"

He placed one foot, in its low black shoe and white stocking, on the step of the victoria.

"To the hotel!" said he.

"The Olympic?" gasped Decatur. "Yes, sah! Yes, *sah!*" And he gathered the reins in a hand which trembled with delight.

The gentleman on the seat crossed his legs and looked a trifle surprised.

"No, no, uncle! To the hotel—the Eagle, of co'se. A vehy fine ca'aige, I must say!"

Again Decatur gasped happily. He knew well enough that the grandeur of the Eagle, once the most famous public house in the state, had long since departed. Nevertheless, he was aware that it would be an extraordinary pleasure to drive there, with this gentleman in his victoria. Decatur felt almost young.

"Hold up, there, you!" called some one imperiously from the sidewalk.

Decatur looked down. He saw a stout man, advancing rapidly toward the carriage. Decatur knew the man by sight. His flashily dressed figure, and pudgy, shrewd countenance, had been familiar for years to the frequenters of State House Square.

"Major Crawford Mayo, isn't it?" said the man, and he extended to Decatur's passenger a fat hand.

"My name, suh," acknowledged the gentleman in the victoria.

"Well, well, Major, I'll just introduce myself. Nack—Augustus Nack—plain Gus, for short. I got a card to you somewheres from Andy Shiras, of the state committee. Well, Major, you made a fine run in your district, over there, last election. Congratulate you, Major!"

"Thank you, suh. Vehy co'teous of you, suh," responded Mayo heartily.

"Now, say, Major," pursued Nack. "Andy sort o' thought I might p'rhaps help you kind o' get settled for the session, bein' how you're likely more'n half a stranger in the city. Any friend o' Shiras can lean on Gus Nack, you bet! And what old scout Gus don't know about this town, Major, aint worth knowing."

He winked jocosely, perceived at once that the wink failed to score, and eliminated it by wiping his red and mottled cheeks with a gaudy handkerchief.

"My tourin' car is just 'round the corner, Major. You get right out o' this miserable rattle-trap, and we'll take a spin, and wind up at my apartments in the Olympic. Open house there, Major, and I want to have the bunch meet you."

Decatur, hunched over despondently on the box-seat, did not move.

"Mr. Nack, suh," said the Major, "I am vehy grateful for your hospitality. Some other time, suh, I hope to do myse'f the honor to accept of it, and to return it, suh. But I'm obliged to beg you to pardon me to-day. The hotel, uncle! I bid you good-evenin', suh!"

Away drove Decatur, with two passions blazing in his heart. One was a permanent and violent adoration for Major Crawford Mayo; the other was hatred, as violent and permanent, for Gus Nack, lobbyist.

At that minute, in the office building on the corner of the square, a potentate of the all-powerful Trolley Trust was reassuring his companions.

"Oh, we'll put through the bill!" he said. "Arnold and the reformers can't stop us, this session. There isn't a man in the state can stop us!"

Looking out of the window, he happened to see in the street a venerable negro on the box of an antiquated victoria. The sight slightly amused him.

Every day for a fortnight, Decatur conveyed the major from the Eagle Hotel to the State House and back again. To Lee Davis he spoke loftily of "mah gen'leman, Major Mayo." He did not tell his son that the remuneration for his services was nebulous; and, in fact, he did not care. Decatur had not been so happy in twenty years.

But there came a disturbing afternoon when the Major directed that he be deposited at the Hotel Olympic, instead of at his lodgings.

"My vehy good friend, Mr. Nack, has kindly asked me to take a julep with him," explained the Major to Decatur. "You may wait."

Decatur waited, until far beyond the dinner hour; and the major finally emerged with a flush on his simple face, a vague unsteadiness of gait, and a joyous light in his innocent blue eyes. Decatur drove by a circuitous route to the Eagle, shaking his head gravely.

The following morning Major Mayo gave Decatur an odd glance, and cleared his throat.

"You must have our ca'aige fixed mighty scrumptious next week, Decatur," he said. "I had a letter this morning, telling how my daughter, Miss Carol Mayo, is coming to stay with me here next week, till I go home. I'll be pow'ful glad to have her seeing after me. It's lonesome here."

"Dat's fine!" said Decatur, touching his hat brim. "Dat's shorely fine!"

"Yes," agreed the Major. "And, by the way, I shall return Mr. Nack's co'teous hospital'ty this evenin', Decatur. Do you know where I can buy any fresh mint in this shif'less town? You don't? Well, I'll do my best."

Later in the day, the young lieutenant-governor encountered Dan Brandow, minority leader of the legislature, on the sidewalk of the State House Avenue.

"What's the latest, Dan?" asked young Arnold.

"We're licked," replied the other, with a weary gesture. "The trolley robbers will lick us. Our only hope was to kill the bill in the house-committee, and the committee's going to vote Friday

forenoon at eleven, sure. I've counted noses until I'm blind, and it's down to one man's vote—but we're licked."

"Whose vote?" said the lieutenant-governor.

He looked around cautiously. There was nobody within hearing except an aged negro, who was brushing out a plum-colored victoria and softly whistling "The Arkansaw Traveler."

"Old Mayo's," said Brandow. "The innocent old fossil is right under Gus Nack's dirty thumb."

"No chance, then?"

"One," Brandow rejoined grimly. "The chance that poor Mayo drops dead Friday morning. If he isn't in the committee-room to vote, we'll beat 'em."

Young Arnold brought his fist down on the railing which surrounded his father's statue.

"If we don't beat Gus Nack," he exclaimed, "it will be a shame and disgrace to the state, and to everybody who ever belonged to it."

Nine o'clock was the hour of Decatur's daily appointment at the Eagle Hotel; but on Friday it was nearly ten before the Major had finished breakfast. He apologized, as might one gentleman to another.

"A vehy delightful party at the Olympic kept me up scan'lous late, Decatur," condescended the Major, with a yawn. "I reckon a little air this mornin' might do me a heap o' good, before goin' to business at eleven. Jus' you drive me a mile or two, where its quiet and sunshiny."

"Yes, sah!" said Decatur. "Yes, *sah!* Make you'self comf'table, Major."

Indeed, it was extremely comfortable on the thick cushions of the victoria. The Major glanced at his watch, and stretched out his legs luxuriously, and yawned again. A pretty picture of his daughter's bright, capable face was pasted in the watch. He missed her wise advice and tender guardianship. In this bothersome committee business for instance—well, the jovial and experienced Mr. Nack probably knew better than he what ought to be done.

The Major discovered that the victoria seemed even more comfortable, when he half-closed his eyes.

Deep in troubled thought, Decatur guided Neb and Chad out of the crowded streets and toward the new riverside drive. At this hour, the winding, asphalted road was deserted. The victoria rolled on quietly, to the drowsy rhythm of the hoof-beats of the placid roans, while, in the trees which lined the avenue, contented birds twittered lazily.

Twice Decatur tightened his grip on the loosely hanging reins for the purpose of turning the horses; twice he hesitated, and let them trot on. He hated to turn. When he did so, it must be to take the Major to the city, where the Major's vote somehow was going to disgrace the Major, and young Mr. Arnold, and all good men in the state. Uneasily, he shifted sideways on his box, and looked down into the victoria. The Major was fast asleep.

"Lawdy!" breathed Decatur.

With supreme caution, Decatur steered into a narrow branch-road, which curved through a wooded hollow. Here it was his intention to halt; then abruptly he decided, in a sort of panic, that to stop the carriage would arouse the Major. He had no notion of the road's destination, as he noiselessly flicked Neb with his long whip.

"Dunno whar we gwine, honey," he whispered, "but we're on our way."

Presently, the asphalt surface vanished, and the road dwindled down to a secluded and hummocky lane. At every lurch of the victoria, Decatur shivered, but he observed with some consolation that the immediate neighborhood now afforded no sign of human tenancy.

He was crossing a rough little stone bridge, when from the victoria arose a satisfied and long-sustained sigh, which finished, however, in a snort of displeased surprise.

"Why—what—where are we, Decatur?"

"Don' egzackly know, Major, but—"

"Turn around this instant!" commanded Mayo. "Go back to the city—to the State House!"

"Yassah," groaned Decatur.

He moved his lips desperately, but it never occurred to him that he could dare openly to disobey the Major, or even at this final opportunity, to warn him against Augustus Nack.

The low parapet of the bridge ended with a post of curiously red and mottled stone. Decatur glared at it, as if it were the mocking face of a detested enemy. Suddenly, his old muscles seemed to become steel, and he tugged the right-hand rein, and slashed the astonished horses. They jumped; the wheels crunched against the post, and on the level ground beyond it, the wreckage of the victoria sank securely into the deep sand.

Unhurt, the Major picked himself up from a pile of leaves, and gazed blankly at Decatur, who was patting Chad's nose and shaking as much as the indignant roans.

"You black rascal, did you do that a-purpose?"

"A-puppus, Major?" faltered Decatur. "Bus' up mah ole victo-yer for good an' all, a-puppus? She's all Ah had in de worl'. Whaffoh would Ah go to lay mah victo-yer in her grave?"

The clock-bell of a suburban church in the remote distance sounded eleven. The Major sat down contentedly on the pile of leaves.

"Well," said he, "there's one comfort. I can't go to that nuisance of a committee-meeting now, for Nack or anybody else."

"No, sah," mumbled Decatur. "No, *sah!*"

One afternoon during the following week, the czar of the Trolley Trust was sitting by his office window in a temper decidedly ruffled. He had just concluded a wrathful interview with Mr. Nack, wherein he had told that discredited lobbyist exactly what he thought of the decisive smothering of his bill in the legislative committee.

The magnate glanced down into State House Square, and a sight which greeted his angry eyes vaguely soothed them. A modishly gowned girl had stopped beside a park bench, for the odd purpose of speaking to an old colored man, dressed in a suit of shabby gray. Her pretty face was so bright and capable that the czar was briefly interested.

"I wonder," Miss Mayo was saying, "I wonder, Decatur, whether you wouldn't like to have us buy another victoria for you."

Decatur Jefferson Fish shook his head.

"Ah reckon dis is quittin' season fer ole Decatur, Miss Ca'ol," said he. "Ah reckon Ah'll jus' set on dis bench, res' o' mah days, an' feed de pigeons. An' victo-yers aint good for much, dese times, anyhow."

"Oh, I'm not so sure of that!" laughed the girl. "Do you think I don't understand?"

The Lemon

By WINONA GODFREY

AS it was pay-day, Miss Willis added a can of olives to her purchase of two chops and a head of lettuce. She was a little late, too, so she had to hurry in order that she might be home and get things well started before Irma came.

Irma worked in a department store which did not close until six, while Dora was a stenographer (not a very good one, though), and "got off" at five and sometimes earlier. Dora had worked for old Mr. Fretwell for ten years. She had started in at twenty-five dollars a month and now received forty-five, which was all Mr. Fretwell could afford to pay.

The old lawyer was not strictly up to date; his practice was dwindling, and his old wife was always "poorly." He could hardly have managed without Miss Willis,—he called her Miss Dora, —who knew how he wanted to say what he was stammering at, and sometimes tactfully suggested that certain things should be done when he was absent-minded.

On the other hand, it was very doubtful whether Miss Dora could have commanded more money elsewhere, had she ever mustered courage to attempt a change—which was almost inconceivable. Her shorthand was self-taught and not very elastic, and neither her movements nor her wits were exactly quick. She was hopelessly *passée* at an age when women nowadays consider themselves most capable and alluring. She had that air of belonging merely to the scenery which colorless people have who spend their lives in a sacrificial attitude before more dominant characters.

The dominant member of the Willis family was Irma. When they were left orphans some fourteen years before, the duty of "bringing up" Irma had devolved upon Dora. And she had accomplished it in very much the same manner in which a three-year-old baby "leads" a big mastiff puppy.

Miss Dora unconsciously hastened her movements when she heard Irma's step in the hall. Irma came in breezily, letting the door slam behind her. She was a big, handsome, high-colored girl.

"Hello, Dode," she called as she pulled off her coat and threw it on a chair. That meant that she was in a good humor.

Dora opened the kitchen door a crack and smiled through it. "Dinner'll be ready in just a minute," she said re-assuringly. "I'll shut the door while I fry the chops."

Irma, humming *"When a maid comes knock, knock, knocking at your heart,"* examined her complexion rather thoughtfully in the wall-bed mirror, pulled her hair down over her ears in the prevailing mode, and then burst into the kitchen.

"Lord, what a smudge! Say, you can get more smoke out of a couple of chops than most people can out of a brush-fire. Why didn't we eat in the other room?"

"Well, I don't know why," Miss Dora apologized. "I just didn't think of it. This smoke'll blow out in a minute." Her small face was flushed and shiny.

Irma seated herself at the tiny kitchen table which about half filled the kitchenette, and Dora set the dinner before her. Then Dora slipped into her own chair and served her sister with the largest chop, the mealiest potato and most of the peas left over from yesterday.

Irma ate with a healthy appetite, and so, for that matter, did the elder sister.

"I'm going to a show to-night," said Irma, presently, "so I've got to hurry."

"Oh, are you? Who with?" Dora asked with interest.

"Les'," returned Irma briefly.

"Oh, Leslie Judd?" Dora's tone hinted disappointment.

"I said so," said Irma. "I tell you there's some class to that boy! He makes thirty a week if he makes a cent."

"Yes, I suppose so," Miss Dora granted. "But oh—I don't know. Somehow—"

"Oh, Do-rah!" Irma drew the name out in disgust. "You make me tired! What's the matter with Leslie? He's the swellest fellow I ever had and you know it. You seem to think a fellow can't be steady if he ties his ties right and you can tell 'em from a mourning band!"

Dora protested. "Really, it isn't that. But, somehow, Charlie—"

Irma laughed. "Oh, Charlie! He was a hit with you, wasn't he? And 'Cousin William'—" At Cousin William she laughed more heartily than ever. "That reminds me, I saw him to-day. He's in the city for a couple of weeks."

"Is he?"

"Yes. He asked if he could come up some evening. You'd think he'd catch on that I didn't want him hangin' around, especially since I quit being at home to Charlie." She leaned back in her chair and patted the hair down over her ears again with an air as if after all it was rather a bore to be so irresistible.

Dora regretted this trait in her young sister, so she always pretended she didn't see it.

"Did he say where Charlie was now?" she asked.

"No, I didn't ask him. Oh, they're a pair all right. I remember when Charlie first introduced his 'Cousin William' I couldn't help saying afterward, 'Say, isn't Cousin William kind of a lemon?' And he was real offended."

A peculiar expression passed over Miss Dora's face as if she had felt a sudden twinge of pain. That delicate use of the word 'lemon' always caught her like a sharp little stab.

When Irma had first begun to have "beaux," her elder sister, being aware of certain weaknesses in Irma's character, had felt some anxiety on her account. She had made a valiant effort to censor those beaux and an equally valiant attempt to play chaperon when censorship proved impossible. In the end, she failed to attend the picnic concerning invitations to which she had heard one of the censored remark: "Say, are we goin' to have to drag the lemon along to this too?"

Miss Dora was quite reconciled to the fact that she did not belong to the type called "attractive to men"—but to be a "lemon!"

Irma, to do her justice, had not resented this "tagging;" still, she was not sorry to be relieved of the slight dampening of perfect joy which Miss Dora's presence was likely to cast over the affairs of her "crowd."

This "lemon" episode, trifling though it was in reality, had a peculiar and permanent effect upon Miss Dora. Although naturally shy, she had not been supersensitive. She had not been self-conscious. She had never, indeed, esteemed herself brilliant nor beautiful, but now she suddenly perceived that she was considered a "lemon." She suddenly understood that Irma's young friends did not wish to be bothered with her. And she had always been so busy "bringing up" Irma, and providing for her food and clothes and a little education that she had neglected making many friends of her own. She was surprised to find, as are many "bringers up," mothers real and foster, that they are not the big ship's rudder as they had fondly supposed, but are merely clinging to the dory that trails behind!

Of all Irma's admirers, Miss Dora had liked Charlie Bradbury the best. He was kind and steady. Miss Dora's standards were perhaps old-fashioned; and perhaps she was biased by the fact that he was always considerate of *her*. Charlie was a clerk in a shoe store and made eighteen dollars a week. He was trying to save his money to buy the shoe store in his native village. He was "cheap" and bought balcony seats when he took Irma to the theatre, so that Irma side-tracked him (her own phrase) very shortly. During his brief tenure of the position of Irma's "fellow," he had brought his cousin William to call. And Miss Dora had a fellow-feeling for William Bradbury, because he too was a "lemon."

When Irma had finished her dinner she went at once to dress, leaving Dora as usual to wash the dishes. At least twenty-five of Irma's forty dollars a month went for clothes. Dora's forty-five provided their living.

At ten minutes to eight, Irma was arrayed in her new shepherd's-check suit, made with a long cutaway coat lined with cerise, and a skirt slit about six inches fore and aft.

"It's certainly swell," Miss Dora agreed, eying the slits with discreetly silent disapproval.

"It certainly was a bargain for nineteen-fifty," exulted Irma. "You couldn't tell it from the forty-dollar one unless you had 'em right together—"

A loud rap-rap on the door interrupted, and she flew to admit a tall, slender young man with dark, wavy hair and a cleft chin like a moving-picture hero.

"Oh, look who's here!" cried Irma, seizing him by the sleeve as he advanced and turning him admiringly. "Aint it all dolled up though!"

"I thought you could hear these clothes at the door without my havin' to knock," said Mr. Judd proudly.

"Well, they are kind of noisy," said Irma, "but perfectly swell! Aint they perfectly swell, Dora?"

"It's certainly a stylish suit," murmured Miss Dora, quite dazzled by the vivid flecks of red and green and blue on a pale tan background.

"Some class, I guess," Mr. Judd

modestly admitted. "I can't hardly get used to no paddin' in the shoulders though."

"I always liked those broad, husky effects," Irma agreed. "But this is real style now. You'll get used to it."

"I guess so," sighed Mr. Judd. "These here trouser-cuffs are awful smart, don't you think?"

"Swell," said Irma.

"Gee, you're some kid yourself." Mr. Judd gallantly transferred his regard. "Say, they certainly know how to make clothes nowadays. They sure show off an elegant figger! Say, you're right there with the framework, little girl, you are!"

"Aw, quit your kiddin'," replied the radiant Irma.

"We better beat it," advised Mr. Judd, consulting his watch. "We're late now."

"I guess we're a poor team, what?" he called back from the door. "If we don't come home, Miss Dora, you'll know we been pinched for putting skids under the society ginks!"

They all laughed heartily at this merry sally.

"Have a good time, children," called Miss Dora after them. "Well, he *is* good-natured," she thought.

The door closed behind them, shutting off their laughter. She was alone. It occurred to her with a sudden poignancy that people were always going off together leaving her alone. She sighed, but self-pity was not her weakness and her thoughts turned back at once to Irma and Mr. Judd.

The situation worried her. Irma's flushed cheeks, his deep glances, a certain consciousness in them both, revealed much. Dora did not dislike Leslie Judd, but she did not approve of him either. Leslie wasn't a bad sort at all; still, as a husband for Irma—they were too much alike, too flighty, improvident, inconsequent. There would be no ballast in such a team. But what was to be done? What could *she* do? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Again Miss Dora sighed. And somebody knocked.

She opened the door and beheld Mr. William Bradbury. His lean, brown, good face wore an embarrassed smile. He fingered his hat nervously.

"How d'ye do, Miss Dora?" he asked in a sort of doubtful way.

"Oh—why—Mr. Bradbury!" Miss Dora fluttered. "Come right in." He came in. "Let me take your hat. Sit here, wont you? Irma just spoke at dinner about seeing you to-day."

"Yes. I asked her if I could come up some time."

"I'm awful sorry she's out," said Miss Dora. "I'm sure she wasn't expecting you this evening."

"No. We didn't set no time," said Mr. Bradbury. "But I just thought I'd come up—"

"I'm glad you did," Dora assured him. "I'm sure Irma will be awful sorry to miss you."

Mr. Bradbury wriggled uneasily in his chair. "Thanks," he murmured.

Miss Dora felt a little flustered. She was not used to entertaining gentlemen. Irma always attended to all the entertaining. Besides, she was very sorry for poor William; she knew his case with Irma to be so hopeless. She felt that it must be quite painful to call upon a person one admires and find her gone out with somebody else.

And she was afraid, too, that poor William knew that he was considered a "lemon." Her heart swelled with sympathetic fellow-feeling. Personally, she thought that William was very nice. She preferred his dark-blue clothes to the splendor of Leslie Judd's; she liked his plain face, and she preferred his shy friendliness to Leslie's facetious assurance.

Almost unconsciously she picked up the waist of Irma's that she had been mending and resumed her task. Then she asked William how business was in his home town, and in a few moments they were talking quite easily of crops and village affairs and city tendencies and so on.

It was ten-thirty before William thought to look at his watch. Exclaiming at the unsuspected lateness of the hour, he rose to go.

"I'll be in town about ten days, I guess," he said at the door. "I'd like to come up again before I go."

"Yes, do," said Miss Dora cordially. "We'll be glad to see you any time. Next time I hope Irma will be at home."

"I'll come sure," he promised. "Will you give Miss Irma my regards? Well, good-night, Miss Dora. I've had—a very pleasant evening."

It was so nice of him to say that, she thought, when he must have been so disappointed.

"Well, sir," said Irma, as she stood before the mirror braiding her hair for the night, "I just pretty near laughed myself to death to-night. I never saw such a funny show. That comedian was just killing. And Les' had on one of his foolish fits, and kept me giggling all evening. Every time the fellow'd say 'That's one on me,' Les' would—"

"I had company," Miss Dora interrupted dreamily, for once in her life not paying strict attention to Irma's remarks.

"Who?"

"Mr. Bradbury. He was awful sorry you weren't at home."

"Not Charlie?"

"No, Mr. William."

"Well, great Scott! What does he think is the matter with him, anyway? I certainly didn't fall on his neck to-day. Honest, men are the limit! Say, isn't that always the way? The old ones are forever taggin' around after the young girls."

"Why, he isn't very old," protested Dora faintly. Poor William!

"I bet he never sees forty again. And look at him! Countrified! A regular lemon."

"Oh, Irma! I think he's real nice."

"Oh, he's *nice* enough," Irma admitted. "But gee whiz! I like a jolly fellow, with a little style to him, and a good spender. Somebody kind of up to date, like Leslie."

Miss Dora sighed a little wearily. People's tastes were certainly different, she reflected. She said no more, however, and Irma returned to the delightful subject of Leslie's wit.

The next night Irma "had a date" with Leslie. And the next night. She had not seen Mr. Bradbury again and had forgotten all about him. She and Leslie, however, had not been gone fifteen minutes before some one knocked, and there as before stood poor William!

"I didn't lose any time, did I?" He grinned a little sheepishly. "I hope you don't mind my comin' again so soon?"

"Oh, not at all. But—but—I'm awful sorry—Irma's out again."

"Is that so? I'm afraid she's an awful gadabout," said William. "But as long as she didn't know I was comin', I guess we can't blame her, can we?" He smiled. Magnanimous William! Dora was glad he could take it that way.

When they were seated, he asked quite frankly: "Is Irma still going with that young Judd?"

"Yes."

He was silent a moment. "That seems to be the kind of fellow girls like nowadays." Dora fancied that he spoke wistfully.

"Oh, I guess Leslie's real nice," she began.

"Oh, I didn't mean anything against him," said William. "He's all right, as far as I know. I was just thinking—" He did not finish.

"A fellow like me," he began again presently. "Oh, well, I guess I'm kind of a lemon." He laughed a little, good-naturedly.

"Oh, don't say such a thing, Mr. Bradbury," cried Miss Dora. She leaned a little toward him. *She* knew how it hurt. She too was a lemon.

"Let's us go somewhere," he suggested. "It isn't too late for a picture-show anyway. What do you say? Shall we?"

Miss Dora somewhat doubtfully assented. Not that she didn't want to go, but she hated to impose on his kindness.

The pictures were very interesting. And they had ice-cream afterward in the cutest little shop.

Irma wasn't as talkative as usual when she came in; and Miss Dora, yielding to some inexplicable, guilty impulse, did not tell her that Mr. Bradbury had called again!

She was still marveling at her own strange conduct as she climbed the stairs late the following afternoon.

The moment she unlocked the door and advanced a step into the familiar room, she perceived that something terrible had happened. Nothing was

changed, and yet— She darted to the little closet and threw open the door. Two-thirds of the hooks were bare. Irma's clothes were gone. Only her own scanty wardrobe, limp and lonesome, hung there in solitude.

With slow, stiff movements she closed the door behind her. Yes, there on the table was the inevitable note. With dull, dry eyes, she read it.

Dear Dora:
Now don't be mad. Leslie and I are married. And we've gone up to Santa Rosa to visit his folks. He's got two weeks vacation and of course I just quit. His firm's going to give him a raise, too. We just decided this noon and I didn't have time to 'phone you. I'll write. Don't get lonesome. Lots of love from IRMA JUDD.

Below was scrawled in another hand: *"Love from your brother Leslie."*

Miss Dora sat down stiffly, and stared at the scrap of paper. Presently a few slow, difficult tears rolled down her cheeks. She was not reproaching Irma. She was not, indeed, thinking any definite thing. She was just *feeling* that it's awful hard, it's awful hard, to care for somebody all her life and then to be left without their ever thinking a thing about it or realizing what it means. She caught herself at that. That was it, she thought, generously: Irma didn't realize. How could she?

Well, there was no use being silly about it. It was done. Life had to go on just the same. She rose, and changed her dress as usual. Then she went out in the kitchen and cooked her dinner—and ate it manfully. Although it *did* go down pretty hard. But there's no use whimpering. You have to go on. You can't just *stop* because a thing doesn't go to suit you. The thing to do, Miss Dora had decided long years before, is just to buck up and not let on. But oh, Lord, it seemed as if it were going to be such an awful lonesome job. Don't be a silly goose, she told herself. You got an awful lot to be thankful for, Dora Willis. So just quit cryin' in the dishwater and behave yourself.

Pursuing this policy, she smoothed her hair, put on a clean apron, and a little powder on her nose, and got out the waist that she was making over.

A sharp *rap-rap* at the door brought her to her feet. She was almost frightened. She actually put her hand on her heart to still its sudden leaping. Could it be—William? He had heard! Oh, poor, poor William!

She opened the door.

"Why, say, look here," began Mr. Bradbury, "is it so that Irma's married Judd?" He seemed excited.

Miss Dora could only stand there, nodding. Her voice, somehow, seemed to have gone.

"Well, by Jinks!" said William. And then he too went dumb, and could only shuffle his feet and turn his hat in nervous fingers.

Miss Dora finally found voice enough to ask him to be seated.

"Didn't you know about it?" he managed to inquire presently.

She shook her head. "No, they just made up their minds to-day, I guess. Of course, I kind of thought they were half engaged, but I didn't know—I didn't think—" She stopped.

"Seems like they might've told *you*," William thought.

She smiled faintly, accomplishing a slight but eloquent shrug.

William wiped his forehead.

"Wont this leave you awful lonesome?" he ventured.

Miss Dora's lip quivered ever so little in spite of herself. "Oh, I'll get along," she said.

William gripped the arms of his chair until his knuckles showed white.

"Say—er—look here, Miss Dora, would you look at me? This is goin' to leave you awful lonesome. I know I'm not much for looks—and—and a fine woman like you— But—but if you would—I'd try awful hard to—to—" He gulped desperately.

Miss Dora stared at him with the wide eyes of one to whom a miracle is vouchsafed.

"Oh, William," sighed Miss Dora —you—I thought—Irma—"

"Irma?" groped William, and saw a sudden light. "Why, did you think—Oh, Irma's all right—for a sister-in-law. Say, would you, Dora?"

"Oh, William," sighed Miss Dora tremulously.

And William was really not awkward in finding her willing lips.

Complete Résumé of Previous Installments

To John Henry Kennard, a prominent young New York corporation lawyer on a vacation in Japan, comes an adventurer named Branson with a strange request: will Kennard, as a favor to a fellow-American, escort Branson's daughter Helen aboard the San Francisco-bound steamer *Lyee Moon?* Kennard accepts the task, and in Helen Branson finds a girl of rare beauty and exceptional charm. Just before sailing time, the two board the *Lyee Moon.* They find that Branson has slipped aboard ahead of them.

Branson, it seems, had penetrated to the mountain fastnesses at the headwaters of the Meinam River in northern China, where dwell the remnant of a strange prehistoric race, the Kymers. These people are governed by twelve patriarchs or "Shans," men of incredible age, who possess a secret which enables them to defy time and to live indefinitely, immune to disease. The essence of this power lies in their possession of the Blue Lizard, a bit of stone impregnated with some tremendously potent substance akin to radium: each of the Shans wears the Blue Lizard on his forehead for one month of the year; and they live on and on, grim, living fossils of human antiquity. Branson has stolen this priceless bit of stone—has it with him! And the Shans are pursuing him.

Three days out from Yokohama, the *Lyee Moon* is seized in the grip of a powerful and hitherto unknown ocean current, probably caused by a volcanic disturbance of the ocean-floor. The ship is whirled from her course; and after a night of terror, an enormous tidal wave rushes upon the doomed vessel and overwhelms it. Helen Branson clings to Kennard, and a moment later he finds himself in the water, fighting for his life and hers. Kennard comes upon a spar, and by its aid the two contrive to keep afloat, and at length drift to land.

It is evident that the island upon which Kennard and Helen find themselves is of recent volcanic origin, for it is covered with strange deep-sea growths; indeed, a mass of gigantic crabs, scrambling back to their ocean home, all but overwhelm the castaways. Presently they discover that Helen's father and some others of the *Lyee Moon's* company have also reached the island. And then a weird, unearthly cry is heard, and through the fog they see the pursuing Shans; the enemy have won their way to the island also!

The castaways contrive to dodge the Shans for the time being, however. A little later they discover that a gigantic ourang-outang which had been carried in a cage on the *Lyee Moon,* has in some fashion reached the island alive. With dawn they perceive that the island is a huge mountain of rock three thousand feet high. And they also perceive that it is sinking rapidly back into the sea! They calculate that in three days it will be entirely submerged; and they therefore start immediately to climb to the higher levels. All at once a boulder comes rolling down upon them from a ledge above; they dodge it; another follows—and they see regarding them over the ledge the withered, sinister face of a Shan!

The rock-bombardment continues; they seek shelter under a ledge, but realize it will soon be battered down. Kennard and Branson undertake a desperate flank movement, and have contrived to crawl up within striking distance of the five Shans unobserved, when a rock hurled from still farther up the peak bounds among the Shans themselves, killing one of them. The Shans flee; and then Kennard and Branson see that Baldy, the ourang-outang, has imitatively rolled down the boulder which has driven their enemies away. Freed of immediate danger, the castaways resume their journey toward the top of the sinking peak. Kennard declares his love for Helen and she confesses that his feeling is returned.

The castaways encamp for the night. Kennard stands guard and is attacked by one of the Shans. After a struggle, Kennard throttles the man. At dawn, the castaways find the water has almost reached them. They resume their journey to the summit of the peak—and find their way impeded by a perpendicular wall of rock. At length they find a cave opening into this wall of rock, and the footprints of the remaining Shans going into it. In desperation, the castaways also enter the cavern, which leads upward. They are set upon by the Shans; Branson is knocked senseless and the precious Blue Lizard is taken from him. The Shans flee. The castaways glimpse daylight ahead.

The Blue Lizard

The final installment of this fascinating serial. Even if you have not read the preceding chapters, you will find this last episode remarkably interesting in itself; if you have read what has gone before, you of course know what a treat is coming.

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

XVIII

THE POOL

THE opening of the tunnel was visible to all the castaways as they came up with Branson—who, though facing death, could think of nothing but the wonderful Lizard which had attracted adventurers to the Valley of Laloi for centuries and centuries. The tunnel, at the spot where he stood, was fully fifty feet high and over seventy feet across, and less than forty yards in front they saw the opening through which the western sunlight was streaming. And they knew that the opening was high above the top of the great rocky collar which separated the upper slopes from the lower.

The floor of the tunnel at this particular spot was level, and Branson, running swiftly towards the opening, spurred on by the hope that the Shans might be immediately outside, stopped suddenly and called out to the others, who were following swiftly.

"There's a pool right in the track!" he cried. "The whole of the floor is taken up with a pool of water."

The five others were not long in reaching his side to prove the statement. The whole of the cavern floor, as Branson had told them, was under water, and the pool blocked their path to the opening of the tunnel. It was not a large pool, being not more than eighty feet in length, and the width being only the width of the tunnel, at the spot. The waters were colored a deep emerald green, and they had a peculiarly poisonous appearance to the six as they stood upon the bank and looked at the quiet pool. They could see no path by which they could reach the solid rock some eighty feet ahead, and they quickly discovered that the water was too deep for them to wade through. Branson had hurriedly slipped over the ledge and lowered himself down to find that his feet could not touch the bottom when the water was up to his chin.

"It is too deep to wade through," he cried, climbing back onto the bank. "And we don't want to swim it if we can find any way of getting over."

In the soft light which came from the opening at the end of the passage, and from innumerable cracks in the roof, the three men surveyed the sides of the pool, thinking that there might be a ledge that would allow them to crawl along above the green water. They could

see no marks which would lead them to believe that either the Shans or the ourang had passed that way. A bed of mud near the edge of the pool showed no footprints, and as they hunted anxiously for a path along the sides of the cavern, they came to the conclusion that the natives and the ourang had turned to the left at the spot where Helen Branson had the strange vision regarding the light.

"This is a snaky looking pool," growled Townsley as he moved from ledge to ledge above the water, in an effort to discover sufficient footing to enable the party to cross without swimming. "I don't like the look of it."

"Nor I," said Kennard. "I would much rather climb across by means of these projections if we can find enough of them to allow us to get across. And I believe we can do it."

Kennard's belief proved to be correct. By clinging to the rock-encrusted sides of the cavern and turning his back upon the water, he managed to traverse the entire length of the pool, finding sufficient rest for the toes of his shoes on the little ledges of rock.

And a weight was lifted from the minds of the six when the lawyer shouted out the information that they could pass, one by one, along the track which he had surveyed. The party had a curious feeling of depression when Branson lowered himself into the pool in an endeavor to discover its depth. Although they could not give a reason for it, they felt that there was something sinister about that green pool which lay like a great emerald in their path.

Kennard climbed back to where the five waited for him.

"It will be quite easy," he said. "There is not much to cling to in some parts of the track, but I think we can manage it."

"Sure," said Branson. "Where we can't get a footing, we must use our hands and cling to the side of the passage."

Kennard, carrying O San, led the way, and he directed Helen Branson how to place her feet as she slowly followed him. Townsley came next, then Ada Merrington and the little spinster, with Branson bringing up the rear. It was not a feat that required any great amount of skill. The ledge, as Kennard explained, gave little support in many places, but the climbers had an opportunity of supporting themselves by clinging to projections that were within reach of their hands. At the most, a plunge into the green water would be the only penalty if they missed their footing, but a drop into the green water was something that not one of the six desired. The unaccountable dislike which they had taken to the emerald-colored basin grew greater as they crawled from ledge to ledge on their way across; and even Branson, who turned occasionally and stared down into the water beneath him, was puzzled by the feeling of repugnance which came to him.

"This is an uncanny little basin," he said, as the six neared the far end. "I can swim, but I have no desire to take a dip in it."

Kennard nodded his head as he took a hasty glance behind him. Afterwards, when they thought over the happenings which followed their passage across the ledge of rock above the green pool, they remembered the feeling of revulsion which had come to them, and they wondered at it. From the moment when they stood and watched Branson climbing down into that place to test its depth, they had become possessed of a great dislike to its quiet waters, and it was with a feeling of relief that they found themselves upon the far side.

The six stood together for a moment and looked back at the path over which they had come. The opening of the tunnel was less than fifty yards from them, and although they had a tremendous desire to feel the warm sunbeams after the climb through the dark passage, they stood looking across the green pool with a curious sense of expectancy upon them.

"What are we waiting for?" asked Townsley.

Kennard glanced at Branson and smiled grimly. He knew that the big man was thinking of the Shans who had again got possession of the Lizard of Life. Branson had a belief that the Shans and the ourang had turned to the

left at the spot where the wall divided the tunnel, and as he felt certain that there was no opening in that direction, he was looking back to see if there was any sign of them following.

"We'll see them racing in this direction directly," he said. "They'll find the other passage is just a blind hole and they'll turn back and follow this track."

And he had hardly uttered the prophecy before a cry came from the black depths of the tunnel, a cry that stirred the six.

"Quick!" cried Branson, dragging the women behind a projecting ledge. "Get under cover! We don't want them to get a glimpse of us! These two devils have the Lizard, and I am going to get it back if I have only an hour to live!"

He shepherded the three women behind an angle of the passage, and this angle, while shielding the six from the eyes of anyone crossing the pool, enabled the three white men to see all that took place.

"Here they are," whispered Kennard. "Look!"

The three men, peering through the crevice which gave them a full view of the pool, caught sight of the two Shans as they burst into the half light on the other side of the water. The two were running at full speed, and in their desperate hurry to reach the opening which they saw ahead of them, they nearly dashed into the green pool which barred their way.

And it was curious that the two natives showed by their actions that they were possessed of the same feeling of repugnance which had come to the little party of whites when they found the obstacle in their path. The two brown men stood and stared at the pool as if doubtful about the advisability of swimming across it, and then, acting as Branson's party had acted only a few minutes before, they started to explore the sides in an effort to find a way to reach the other side without wetting themselves.

"They'll find the way by which we came," whispered Kennard. "Look! They've got it."

One of the two made the discovery, and he immediately called out the information to his companion. A great hurry was upon them, and with a display of agility that was remarkable, they started to climb along the ledge towards the side upon which Branson and his party waited.

"Now I'll get my treasure back," muttered Branson. "I'm willing to wager that it is the Lizard which the first beggar is holding in his right hand."

Kennard and Townsley, peering through the crevice, were convinced that Branson was right. The leading Shan was using only one hand to clutch the wall of the cavern as he climbed. Unlike Branson's party, the brown men elected to face the green pool as they crawled hurriedly above it.

The three white men watched them breathlessly, while the two girls and the little spinster awaited developments. Branson was waiting anxiously for the two Shans to reach the side upon which the little party were, and Kennard and Townsley were certain that the big man would make an effort to recover the Lizard. And the lawyer and the tea merchant felt that they could not take their eyes from the leading Shan as he crawled with the activity of a cat towards them.

The Shan, holding the Lizard, reached a point about the middle of the pool, when he stopped suddenly, as if his attention had been caught by something within the green waters beneath him. He stood like a man who had been seized by a great fear, and although his companion cried out to him to move forward, he made no attempt to shift from the projection on which he stood. With arms reaching backwards and clutching the wall of the cavern, he stood like a brown statue of a Hindu deity.

The three white men stared at him with eyes of astonishment. They could see no reason for the sudden halt, and they could see nothing in the green water which would disturb the man who looked down into it as if he saw something which paralyzed his muscles. But it was evident that the Shan saw something in the green depths. They were certain of that. They were close enough to see that his mouth opened and shut as if he were making a supreme effort to cry out for help, but the danger

which he alone saw prevented him from making a sound.

And the danger in the depths was suddenly disclosed to the Shan in the rear. He gave a yell of fear and turned to rush back along the ledge over which he had come. His feet slipped as he hurried, and another scream which came from him as he caught hurriedly at the rocks told the watchers that there was something in the waters beneath him which he did not want to meet at close quarters.

But it was the leading brown man, who looked as if he had been turned into stone, that held the attention of the three white men. And they felt pleased at the moment that the two girls and the little spinster had no view of what was taking place. They felt certain that they were going to witness something that would not be an altogether agreeable sight to the three women.

And the premonition was proved to be correct by the happening that followed. Up out of the green waters of the pool came something white and snaky—something horrible and repulsive. It was a white tentacle, feeling blindly, as if groping for something which it had a dim idea was near but which it was unable to see.

It was a sickening sight to the three white men. The snaky feeler waved backwards and forwards, reaching up and up towards the ledge upon which the Shan remained motionless, his head thrust forward as if drawn by the fascination of the tentacle which rose slowly towards him.

With dry lips and throat the three men watched and waited. They forgot the dangers which threatened them at that moment. They forgot the rising waters, forgot the little space of life which would be theirs if the peak continued to slip back to its old position beneath the waves. They forgot everything but the single white feeler which was waving backwards and forwards, exhibiting no hurry to reach the brown figure that was powerless to get out of its reach.

"Oh, gee!" gasped Kennard. "Watch it!"

Nearer and nearer the feeler came to the motionless man. The three watchers saw that his knees loosened with the great fear which was upon him, and that he sagged downwards toward the feeler which waved in front of his brown legs. The man's mouth opened and his chin rested on his bosom as he looked down at the snaky thing which waved before him.

A tremendous yell split the terrible silence of the place. It did not come from the doomed man. It was a cry of agony which came from his companion on the other side of the pool, who, while watching the tragedy which was happening, realized that he himself would never possess the courage to pass over the place where the owner of the white feeler was waiting in the green waters.

It was an enormous tentacle. It looked as if it were displaying its great length by the manner in which it reached up and up. It passed within a few inches of the Shan's bony knees, and the nerves of the three white men were on a terrific tension as they waited for one of the tremendous suckers to come in contact with the bare flesh.

But the long feeler did not touch the legs of the Shan. It looked as if the horrible eyes of the devil fish beneath the green water of the pool had a perfect knowledge of the inability of its victim to escape, and that it was terrorizing the wretch before seizing him. The tentacle waved backwards and forwards immediately in front of him, as if the suckers were seeking the most vulnerable part of the victim.

"Why the dickens," muttered Townsley. "Why the dickens—"

He stopped and looked at Branson, and the adventurer's face told him that the big man remembered that the unfortunate native who was facing a terrible death had in his possession the wonderful Blue Lizard. And the recalling of that fact stirred Branson into action. He made a rush from behind the angle of rock which hid the six from the view of the Shans, but Kennard, divining his purpose, flung himself upon him, and the two slipped to the floor of the cavern. Kennard understood that the madness to possess the Lizard, which was upon Branson at that moment, would make him take risks that no one but a lunatic would accept. At

any moment another snaky tentacle might flash out of the water with alarming suddenness and grip anyone who approached the man, who was already as good as dead.

And as John Henry rolled to the floor with the big man, the waving tentacle struck the body of the Shan. It circled his waist, and it seemed to drag him forward with tremendous force. The unfortunate native released his grip of the wall and sank slowly down towards the green water under which the monster devil fish waited.

But at the very moment when he released his clutch upon the wall, his dazed intelligence seemed to inform him that he was in possession of the wonderful treasure of his tribe. And, although certain that he was facing death, he made an effort to pass the treasure to his companion at the far end of the pool. Townsley saw the movement distinctly. The doomed man swung his right hand, which contained the precious Lizard, and Townsley saw the flash of light as the wonderful piece of mineral went through the air.

But the strength of the thrower was not sufficient to carry the Lizard to the end of the pool. The strange treasure that had attracted Mongol conquerors and Pathan princes made a circle over the green waters and dropped into the pool at a point some three yards from the edge where the terrified companion of the doomed man knelt!

XIX

BALDY RUNS THE BLOCKADE

KENNARD took a hasty glance at the empty ledge as he struggled with Branson; then he released his grip, and the infuriated adventurer got upon his feet. He stood and stared at the spot where the Shan had been standing, and then turned to Townsley.

"Did he take it with him?" he gasped. "Did you see?"

"He tried to fling it to his companion," answered Townsley. "He jerked it at the moment when he was drawn down, but it fell into the pool."

Branson made a movement as if he would run along the ledge, but he stopped before he had climbed a yard from the shore. Up out of the green water at the spot where the Shan had disappeared, come two white feelers which moved up and felt along the ledge as if convinced that there was further prey waiting to be gathered in. And those blind feelers groping around the ledge stopped Branson from going further. There was something horribly chilling in the snaky tentacles, and he stepped back onto the floor of the cavern and watched the feelers moving backwards and forwards as if they were certain that they would meet with something as toothsome as the Shan which had been conveyed to the malignant thing in the green depths.

"There is no hope of recovering the Lizard," cried Kennard. "It is lost to you and the Kymer tribe for all time. I would not go back over that rock for a million dollars."

"But—but it was the greatest thing in all the earth," muttered Branson. "There was nothing like it! Nothing!"

"Well, it has disappeared forever," said Kennard. "It is lost to the world. Look at the other Shan. Why, he is dying of fright at the very thought of having to run the blockade."

And it looked as if the Shan on the other side of the pool were really expiring with the great fear which came upon him after witnessing the fate which had overtaken his companion upon the ledge. His legs had given way, and he was lying full length upon the floor of the tunnel.

"He'll never have the nerve to get across," cried Townsley. "He couldn't pass that thing now if a dozen lives depended upon it."

The two girls and the little spinster, who had been alarmed at the struggle between Branson and Kennard when the younger man had tried to keep Helen's father from rushing along the ledge, had now come out from behind the angle in the wall which blocked their view of the green pool. And they seemed to understand what had happened when their terror-stricken eyes caught sight of the white feelers—which were still industriously searching the ledge as if convinced that there was something more to be drawn down to

the parrot-billed monster hiding in the depths. Those waving tentacles carried to the three women a knowledge of the fate which had overtaken the Shan. They stared at them without speaking, and Helen Branson, remembering how her father had lowered himself into the water to test its depth when they had first reached the green pool, rushed to his side and flung her arms around his neck.

For five minutes the six stood with their eyes upon the waving tentacles. It looked as if the infernal devil fish was certain that the Shan upon the other side of the pool would have to pass that way, and that patience would be rewarded.

The silence which was upon the party was broken by an exclamation from Townsley, and another of the *Lyee Moon's* passengers appeared upon the far side of the water. It was the big ourang who came racing out of the tunnel!

"Baldy!" cried Townsley. "Watch what effect the tentacles will have upon him."

The ourang halted for a moment when he saw the Shan lying upon the floor of the tunnel, and with careful movements he approached the green pool. And the animal evidently saw something sinister in the appearance of the emerald-colored basin. He stared at it as he approached very cautiously, and then, as his eyes sought for a means of reaching the other side, he saw the waving tentacles which swept backwards and forwards at the spot where the doomed native had been drawn down.

And Baldy was aware of the meaning of those snaky feelers. He gave a scream of terror as his eyes fell upon them, and he danced up and down the edge of the pool as if screaming threats at the horrible devil fish in the green depths.

But all the ourang's noise did not disturb the owner of the white feelers. Instead, the monkey's screams seemed to convey to the devil fish the information that vigilance was more than ever necessary to guard the path, and another tentacle was thrust up to help the two feelers in guarding the way over which Baldy would have to pass to reach the opening tunnel. The manner in which the third tentacle had been thrust up made the six watchers on the side near the opening shudder as they thought of the malignant intelligence of the thing beneath the water.

The ourang, still facing the pool, backed away from the water into the dark depths of the tunnel, but the knowledge that retreat was barred to him again drove him forward towards the pool. Baldy realized that the only way out was by means of the ledge over which the little party had gone, and in spite of the fact that he was crazed with the fear brought about by the sight of the sucker-lined tentacles, the watchers on the other side knew that he intended to take a chance. He was possessed of more courage than the Shan, who was unable to move on account of the great fear which was upon him.

Baldy decided that immediate action was necessary, and very cautiously the big brute crawled out over the narrow path, his eyes upon the feelers as he clung with his great hands to the barnacle-encrusted side of the cavern. The brain of the ourang was busy thinking out a plan to dodge those blind arms which were looking for another victim. He was busy calculating the possibilities of escape. His quick eyes were upon the projections high above the spot where the three tentacles guarded the path. The watchers on the other side held their breath anxiously.

The ourang, climbing carefully, reached a point within five feet of the spot where the tentacles were waving, and it seemed to the little party that the nearness of the animal made the huge feelers more active than ever. Very cautiously they moved towards Baldy, and the animal, gripping the wall with his strong, hairy paws, shivered as he watched them. The six watchers felt certain at that moment that the same fate would come to him as had overtaken the Shan. It seemed as if the fear of the monster in the water would paralyze the muscles of the ourang and leave him a victim of the snaky feelers.

But Baldy was not as easily vanquished as the brown man. He realized

the danger of his position, and he acted quickly. Fully five feet above him was a projection of rock, and as the feelers came quietly in his direction, he sprang upward. One muscular arm gripped the projection, and for a moment he swung there, looking down into the water. And it was then that Branson's party understood how the ourang was going to circumvent the devil fish in the green pool. Baldy realized that it would be death to him to attempt to crawl along the ledge, and as he swung by one great hairy forepaw from the jutting rock, they saw that he intended to leap to another fully ten feet from the one to which he was hanging. And that leap would carry him over the spot where the white feelers guarded the passage.

The big animal swung backwards and forwards by his muscular arms like a great pendulum.

"Watch him!" cried Branson. "He's going to let go when he swings forward!"

Branson had rightly timed the exact moment when Baldy would let go of the rock. The ourang released his grip and hurled himself through the air in the direction of the projection, which was ten feet in front of him. Beneath the ourang as he sprang across the gulf, the three feelers threshed backwards and forwards, as if aware that he was making an effort to escape, but Baldy kept his eyes upon the ledge he aimed to reach. His big arms encircled it, and he drew himself hurriedly up lest his hind quarters might be within reach of the tentacles. He had safely negotiated the danger spot, and now he unloosed his scorn for the devil fish in a flow of monkey talk, chattering madly as if congratulating himself upon what he had done as he lowered himself down and rushed across the lower path. Baldy had shown himself the possessor of more courage than the Shan, who lay upon the far side of the pool, unable to plot out a way to escape.

The ourang sprang by the six who were standing near the angle in the passage, and still chattering, he rushed out of the opening into the sunlight.

"And we had better follow his example," said Branson. "I am anxious for a breath of fresh air."

The six took no further notice of the solitary Shan, who appeared to be unconscious with fear. They left him there with the white tentacles guarding the path over which he would have to pass if he made a rush for safety, and with a numbed feeling upon them, they stumbled towards the opening passage. The tragedy which they had witnessed had not improved the condition of their nerves, and they were not inclined for speech as they made for the mouth of the tunnel.

The pursuing waters had not been idle during the time the six had spent in working their way up the passage. As the party came out into the open, they discovered that the mouth of the tunnel opened, as Branson had predicted, upon the western side of the cliff at a point about two hundred feet above the wall of rock around which they had raced when looking for an opening.

And that great barrier which had defied their efforts to scale it, had proved no obstacle to the pursuing waters. When Branson's party came out upon the slope they found that the Pacific had climbed up and up till the waters were now within a few feet of the top of the great wall. The position of the six was midway between the top of the wall and the highest pinnacle of the peak, so that there was not more than four hundred feet of the rock still above water. And after making the most favorable calculations, Branson was certain that there was not more than twelve hours of a margin between the little party and the death which relentlessly pursued.

Helen Branson, when she rushed out into the sunlight, turned towards the great golden sun which was flaming down the western sky. Kennard, with his eyes upon the ocean, stumbled after her. John Henry was torn with a thousand fears. It looked as if it would be the last sunset for the little party of six, and the lawyer could not trust himself to speak to the girl, whose beautiful face showed that she still held to the hope that they would be rescued. Kennard had, in spite of all the hopes which had come to Helen and himself during that terrible climb up the side

of the peak, been possessed of a feeling that the devilish waters would get them after all. He had nerved himself for the end which he thought to be near, but he knew well that the girl was so filled with the thoughts of rescue that she had not considered the possibility of death.

The two were some little distance in front of the four others who were following behind them. They were tired, hungry, and dispirited, but they thought neither of food nor rest. It was not possible to think of either when they looked back and saw how much of the peak had slipped beneath the water since the early morning. Only a few short hours before, they had been stumbling along at the foot of the great stone wall, and now as they glanced back, the waves swept over the top of the wall and crept gradually up the slope.

The ourang realized the full danger of their position. The moment he had sprung from the opening of the tunnel he had dashed up the slope, and, as the six climbed, they could see him dancing madly on the topmost pinnacle of the peak. Baldy understood the danger they were in, but his monkey brain, which had enabled him to outwit the tentacles of the devil fish, could not show him any means of escaping the fate which was creeping upon him.

Kennard, answering a question of Branson's, looked for a moment behind him; then, as he turned to Helen, who was now in the lead, he received a shock. The girl had fallen upon her knees, her eyes upon the western horizon towards which the golden sun was slowly sinking. And her attitude so astounded Kennard that it was a few moments before he was able to move or voice an inquiry.

At last he made a rush forward and stammered out a question.

"What is it?" he cried. "Helen! Helen! What is the matter?"

The girl lifted her glorious face and pointed towards the horizon. And Kennard, dazed with her beauty, turned and stared in the direction in which she pointed.

"Look!" she cried. "Look! A steamer is coming!"

XX

THE WINGS OF PROVIDENCE

THE feelings of the six as they stood together and watched the smear of smoke upon the western horizon, could not be put into words. Ada Merrington and the little school mistress fell upon their knees beside the girl whose red lips were already offering up a prayer of thanks for the deliverance which her supreme faith had told her to expect. The three men stood behind the two girls and the little spinster, their drawn faces turned towards the west, where the trail of smoke from the approaching steamer drifted across the brassy sky. The men, although hopeful, did not feel that the mere sight of a steamer upon the horizon would bring about a rescue, and, divided with fear and hope, they watched the outline of the vessel which they were now certain was sailing in the direction of the peak.

Kennard was the most hopeful of the three men. As he stood and watched Helen Branson, he felt that the girl had been gifted with some spiritual foresight which told her that Providence, watching over those who are helpless, would rescue them before the hungry waters of the North Pacific again swept over the peak of terror. The lawyer's mind dragged up the many incidents of the two days during which they had fled before the waves. He reviewed the girl's manner when she had asserted with sweet confidence, again and again, that her little prayers would be answered. As he thought over the incident in the dark tunnel where she had guided them to the right path, he felt sure that she had in some way been given a sight of the upper opening of the tunnel through which they had come. And now, while Branson and Townsley were distressed with fear lest the steamer would pass without investigating the peak, he looked at Helen Branson and drew fresh faith from the light of happiness upon her face.

"They might not see us," whispered Branson.

"They will!" said Kennard fiercely. "I know they will!"

The big man gave the lawyer a keen glance of inquiry, but Kennard did not

notice of the look of scrutiny. He was watching the girl he loved, whose wonderful blue eyes were turned upon the approaching boat, and whose lips were still murmuring prayers of thanks

The smear of smoke upon the horizon had grown greater, and every minute brought the vessel nearer. Now they could see distinctly the outline of the steamer, and hope bubbled within their breasts. Even Townsley, who was more despondent than any of the six, became certain that they would be seen, while the little school mistress sobbed as if her heart would break with the joy which had come to her. From the moment when the great wall of rock had barred their way early in the morning, the little teacher had been unable to speak, but now as she knelt beside Helen Branson, she started to sob out her thanks for the deliverance she saw at hand.

And during those joyful moments as they stood and watched the approaching steamer, they forgot the fact that the ocean was still pursuing them.

"We must get to the summit!" cried Townsley. "Quick! Let us get to the top and signal them!"

Kennard put his arms around Helen Branson and lifted her to her feet. Then, holding the girl, who was still murmuring her prayers for the deliverance which she felt was near, he rushed up the slope.

But it looked as if the relentless ocean was inclined to make a battle for its prey. As the six stumbled towards the pinnacle which glittered in the afternoon sun, the rumbling noise which they had heard once before came to their ears. The peak rocked as the tremendous force which had thrown it upward gave a fresh manifestation of its power.

The little party, horrified at the thought of what might follow the disturbance, halted and gazed at the water. The great cone rocked violently, and then, with a sudden rush, it sank fully a hundred feet in one great dive. And the waves which were stirred by the sudden plunge swept hungrily up the slope as if to seize the six before the steamer came close enough to rescue them from their dire peril.

Ada Merrington and the little spinster gave shrieks of terror as the charging waves swept up the slope, but Kennard, watching the face of Helen Branson, saw that the placid look did not leave her features even when the waves caused by the sudden slide came within a few yards of the spot where they were standing. Kennard knew that the girl had an implicit faith in the Providence watching over them, and he felt that her spiritual sight had already seen them safe and sound upon the deck of the approaching steamer. He realized that she was so certain of rescue that the look of calm would not leave her face if the naked rock disappeared altogether beneath the waves. She had told him on the day when he had first confessed his love for her that she felt certain that her prayers would be heard, and the look of conviction on her face made him feel sure that now, more than ever, she felt that they had the protection of the all-watchful Providence to whom she had prayed.

"Hurry," cried Branson. "She has altered her course and is making towards us!"

Up and up they raced, their eyes turned alternately from the steamer to the pursuing waters. Now they were certain that the vessel was making towards the peak. The uncharted rock had evidently attracted the attention of the captain, and the steamer was moving towards it to investigate.

Branson whooped for joy as he hurried the little spinster up the slope, and the big man forgot the wonderful Blue Lizard at that moment. He forgot everything but the fact that rescue was in sight. And the five others forgot all the terrors through which they had passed upon that peak of horror. They forgot the Shans, and the hours of dread during which they had fled before the pursuing waves. Rescue was at hand, and the hope which had been strangled in the darkest hours now lifted all fear from their minds and made them like little children with the great joy which they experienced.

And as they reached the summit, they saw that the chattering ourang knew that rescue was near. When the six stumbled onto the little plateau at the

top of the peak, they found that Baldy was looking towards the approaching steamer and dancing a wild monkey dance of joy as he watched the vessel.

Branson stripped off his tattered shirt and waved it as the steamer came closer. The big man was crazy with joy. Kennard and Townsley shouted till their throats were hoarse, although there was not the slightest possibility of their voices carrying across the sunlit waters to the vessel. Ada Merrington came out of the half stupor into which she had been thrown by the wreck of the *Lyee Moon,* and the little spinster became a new being as she gazed at the steamer. Only Helen Branson remained calm, calm with the same great faith which had been noticeable during their flight up the rock.

They felt that they were seen. The summit of the peak was in the full glare of the afternoon sun, and it was impossible for the steamer to overlook them. And the movements of the vessel confirmed their opinions. She was bearing down upon the peak, and Helen Branson smiled at John Henry as he whooped madly to show his contempt for the waters that were trying to outrace the vessel steaming across the sunlit waters.

"They see us!" cried Branson. "They see us!"

And Branson was right in his assertions. Nearer and nearer the big boat steamed, and it was evident to the shipwrecked six that the island was under scrutiny from her decks. She came close enough for them to notice the unusual bustle aboard brought about by the discovery of the six upon the sinking peak, and when the vessel stopped, and they saw a boat lowered, they yelled till they startled the ourang. Baldy's nerves had not quite recovered from the shock they received from the white tentacles at the green pool, and he made as if he would rush down the slope when Branson's bass voice roared across the ocean.

Kennard seized Helen Branson's hands and kissed them reverently.

"It was your prayers that brought them," he cried. "It was you, dear heart, who saved us."

"God saved us," she said simply.

Nearer and nearer came the boat, and the six watchers stood together in silence. The ourang was the only one who continued to express his terror and delight. He danced backwards and forwards upon the flat summit of the purple peak and chattered madly as if to urge the rowers to greater effort. And the ourang's fear was not without foundation at that moment. The purple peak was making its last dive at a rate that made the little party make nervous calculations regarding the time necessary for the boat to reach them. The rumbling noise which came from beneath the water grew louder and louder, and the section of rock upon which they stood trembled violently. Every sound foretold another disturbance which they felt sure would bring about the final plunge of the rock.

Baldy's fear as the rumbling noise grew louder was pitiable to behold. He evidently expected that one of the white feelers that had guarded the ledge near the green pool might stretch up at any moment from the water which crept hurriedly towards him, and he screamed as the rowers in the boat, who were now cognizant of the danger which threatened the party, redoubled their efforts to reach the rock in time to save them.

Helen Branson's strength gave out at that moment. The wonderful courage which had buoyed her up during the hours upon the peak left her when she knew that rescue was at hand. She clung to Kennard as the second officer of the *Loch Allen,* standing up in the boat, urged his men forward. And Kennard, noticing her distress, gathered her up in his arms and held her there till the boat was alongside the rapidly disappearing rock. The rescue had not taken place a moment too soon. They had run a race with death and had won by a hair's breadth. It looked as if Providence had tested their belief by keeping them upon the place till the last possible minute.

Kennard breathed a prayer of thankfulness as he passed the girl, who clasped O San in her arms, to the husky sailors in the boat. The purple peak was nothing but a small rock over which the waves of the Pacific were now breaking.

"Look out for the ourang!" cried the officer. "Keep him off there! Hurry! Quick, boys! Quick! This rock is liable to go down with a plunge at any moment, and it will create a little whirlpool that might suck us after it!"

Branson and Townsley passed Ada Merrington and the little spinster into the boat, while the sailors held Baldy at bay with their oars till the little party of six was safely aboard.

"Can't we take him?" cried Branson, turning to the officer. "The ourang? Can't we get him aboard? He helped us out when we were in a corner."

"How the dickens can we?" growled the mate. "We cannot get him in the boat. That brute would upset us."

A tremendous spasm shook the peak; the rumbling noise increased, and the mate yelled out an order that made the sailors act hurriedly.

"Push off!" he cried. "Look out there! The ourang!"

Baldy, mad with terror, made a rush at the boat as it pushed off. A sailor brought his oar down upon the head of the big animal and drove him under water, but Baldy, with the instinct of self preservation strong upon him, came to the surface and gripped the stern of the boat with his big paws.

The mate lifted a boat hook to bring it down on the hairy hands, but Branson cried out to him.

"Don't knock him off!" yelled the big man. "He wont try to come aboard! He'll cling there till we reach the steamer!"

And the intelligence of the ourang seemed to make him understand that he was to keep in that position till the boat reached the *Loch Allen*. Still chattering, as if expressing his opinion upon disappearing peaks and devil fish, his jaw resting upon the stern of the boat, his two hairy hands gripping it tightly, Baldy was towed along till the boat reached the side of the *Loch Allen*. He was an inoffensive ourang-outang, who seemed to be tremendously subdued by his recent experiences.

And he understood his position at that moment. He waited till the six members of the little party had gone up the ladder; then he climbed quietly into the boat, and, wet and disgusted, was hoisted upon the deck of the steamer. Here he was immediately secured by a strong net manipulated by a dozen of the crew, and whisked hurriedly into a store-room, until a cage could be built for him. And Baldy made little protest against his capture. He was only too pleased once more to be aboard a steamer, and he sat in the corner of his quarters expressing his opinion upon devil fish and disappearing peaks as the *Loch Allen* got under way.

It was four hours after the rescue when John Henry Kennard, standing by the side of Helen Branson, looked back over the rail at the spot where the strange purple peak had once reared itself against the sky. The deep blue of the heavens was filled with stars that shone like the eyes of guardian angels, and as the man and the maid stood together, looking out over the ocean upon which the soft night had fallen, they were filled with a wonderful feeling of content and happiness. Their troubles were at an end. The terrible hours which had followed the sinking of the *Lyee Moon* had tried their courage, but they had come through the ordeal bravely.

"And we're bound for Frisco," murmured the girl.

"For Frisco," repeated John Henry. "And your father said that he has no objection to our wedding taking place the moment we land."

The lawyer stooped and kissed the face of the girl by his side, and O San, nesting in Helen's arms, purred softly in the darkness.

"I am so happy, Jack," murmured the girl. "I am very, very happy. They say that a black cat brings luck, and I am sure it does. Didn't O San bring me—bring me you, Jack?"

And as Kennard folded the supple figure of the girl in his arms, he blessed the thought which prompted Captain Eric Branson to confide in him that night in the Grand Hotel at Yokohama.

THE END

Flute and Violin—Con Amore

A little matter of music and love—with a bit of a conspiracy thrown in. You'll find it a most engaging tale.

By BARRY PRESTON

CORNELIUS CARNEY came fully awake in the midst of Schubert's "Serenade." Schubert's "Serenade" is all right at certain times, but one of the times when it is not all right is at nine o'clock in the morning when you have just fallen asleep after eight hours on the night shift in a foundry.

Carney sat up in bed and muttered sleepy invective at the droning notes of the violin, stealing in through the open window. It was plain the usual morning repertory was in full swing. He knew that Schubert's "Serenade" had been preceded by "Annie Laurie" and "The Last Rose of Summer," and that immediately following it, his unwilling ears would be regaled with the intermezzo from "Cavaleria" and certain other classy stuff the identity of which was beyond his ken.

He pounced, still muttering, out of bed and slammed shut both the windows in the room. But, when he got back into bed again, for all the closed windows, it seemed to him that the intermezzo, just beginning its first wails, was even louder than usual.

"Aw, heavens!" said Mr. Carney—or perhaps it was a shorter word he used—and left his couch once more, viciously yanking one of the blankets off the bed and draping it in unlovely fashion about his rather too ample form.

Carney went to the front window and scowled out at the little house across the street—the house those people named McNamara had rented and moved into the week previous. Out of the open front windows of the second story came the intermezzo, full blast now, with all the quavers and wails and sighs that could be put into it. Carney's face grew black. For a moment he thought of opening his own windows and shouting his full and unexpurgated wrath across the narrow street. Then he thought better of this move and instead he thumped lustily on the bedroom floor with one bare heel. This brought no answering bustle on the part of Mrs. Carney below stairs, so Carney moved into the hall.

"Aggie!" he bellowed in soulful distress. "Say, Aggie!"

This also bringing no answer, he wrapped the blanket more closely about him and went padding down the front stairs, talking to himself in unseemly fashion as he went.

Carney poked through the front hall to the little kitchen, and just as he gained it, the back door flew open and flew shut and Mrs. Carney, a shawl over her head and fire in her eyes, came in. Mrs. Carney was angry. One glance at her fat and usually placid face showed that plainly.

"I knew ye couldn't be sleepin' wit'

all that caterwaulin' goin' on, dearie," said she. "So I went over and had a word wit' them McNamaras—worse luck to 'em!

"I gives the door-bell the divil's own yank and 'twas Mrs. McNamara herself that opens the door.

"'"'Tis an awful rumpus that's goin' on ev'ry blessed mornin' in this neighborhood these days—which was peaceful enough before certain folks moved into it,' says I.

"'"'Meanin' jest phwat, now, Mrs. Carney?' says she, looking like a icicle—the weazened thing she is.

"'"'Meanin' the fiddle playin',' says I, 'which do be disturbin' the rest of better people than them as has no more sense than to be makin' the uproar,' says I.

"At that her face gets black.

"'"'My Lily,' says she, 'is ambitious. She don't intend to stay all her days in the orchestry she's playin' in now,' says she. 'Besides,' says she, '"'tis time all decent and rayspectible people was awake.'

"'"'Me husband,' says I, 'do be on the night shift at the foundry and has to get his sleep days,' says I.

"'"'Ye talk as if that was *my* fault,' says she sarcastic. 'Believe me, Mrs. Carney, I had nothin' at all to do wit' it,' says she.

"I could 'a' clawed the smug grin that she put on wit' them words. But I held me temper, dearie, and I says: 'At least ye might get yer Lily to shut them winders while she's practicin'.'

"'"'She'll do nothin' of the sort,' says she. 'She aint the ruggedest girl in the world, and what wit' bein' inside as much as she is wit' her practicin' and playin' in the orchestry at the movin'-picture show, she needs all the air she can be gettin'. Also, Mrs. Carney,' says she, 'when ye pay the rent of this house 'twill be high time to be sayin' what goes on in it.'

"And she bangs the door in me face. Are ye goin' to let anny new upstarts in this neighborhood put annything like that over on ye, Con Carney?"

"I am not," said Carney with deep conviction, and he drew the blanket about him as if it had been a toga. "'Twill stop—the noise of that violin, Aggie—or I'll know the reason why. I've bought this house and paid for it all except the last three installments. I'll not be druv out of it be anny violin-scrapin', either. I'll—I'll—"

Just what Mr. Carney was intending to do will probably never be known, for at that moment he caught sight of young Artie Concannon in the yard of the house next the one from whence came the offending squeals of the violin. A sudden smile—the first that morning—wreathed Carney's heavy features.

"Ye might make out a complaint against it as a public nuisance," suggested Mrs. Carney.

"That wouldn't do—it wouldn't do at all," he declared. "They've paid the rent. I suppose they have the right to do as they want. There's a better way than that. Just let me get on something a bit more dacent than this bed-spread and I'll see what can be done about it."

"Ye're goin' across the street yourself?" asked she, and her tone implied it would only farther complicate matters if he adopted such a course.

"I'm goin' across the street," he admitted, "but not to the McNamaras; have no fear of that."

Presently Carney, fully dressed and smiling grimly, went out the front door. Across the way Artie Concannon, a young man with an amiable if rather weak face, was pruning the one rose bush the parental yard boasted.

Carney crossed the street and leaned his elbows on the Concannon's fence.

"Ye're stayin' out late this evenin'," suggested Artie, with one of his stereotyped attempts at humor.

"Maybe," Carney admitted. "Now maybe. There's reasons," he ended, glaring savagely at the open front windows on the second floor next door, from which the strains of the classy stuff were now drifting out.

Artie Concannon snipped off a dead shoot and grinned his sympathy.

"Now what," said Carney, "has become of that flute ye used to be tootlin' on every night?"

Young Mr. Concannon flushed uncomfortably.

"Times has been hard since I lost me last job," said he. "But I have the ticket for it."

"How much is it in for?" asked Carney.

"Four and a half was all I could get on it," said Artie.

Carney knitted his brows and watched Artie snip off the one branch of the rose bush which had any signs of vigor in it.

"Ye'd oughter keep up yer practice now ye're doin' nothin' else," said he. "'Twould be a rare time for ye to be practicin' on the flute. Ye have to make queer noises in some of yer practice exercises, don't ye?"

"I guess I make 'em, whether I have to or not," said Artie with a grin.

"Ye'd be willin' to do me a little favor?" asked Carney, leaning confidentially farther over the fence.

"Ask me and see," said Artie.

Carney reached in his trousers pocket and drew out a ten-dollar bill. He smoothed it thoughtfully on the fence-top. Artie cast longing eyes at it.

"I might leave this here," he said, "if I thought ye'd get that flute outer hock and begin to tootle it again—tootle it every time that infernal racket starts up next door, and keep a-tootlin' it every blessed time she plays till they get onto themselves and either stop that fiddlin' or move out of the neighborhood."

Young Concannon laid aside his pruning shears and advanced towards the fence.

"I do miss that flute somethin' fierce," he grinned.

He was close to the fence now. One tentative hand was sliding along the top towards the crisp bill. Carney, however, kept his own big paw over it.

"Every blessed time she tunes up, you do, remember that!" he stipulated.

"You're on," said Artie.

Whereupon Carney took his hand from the bill and went back across the street, grinning delightedly to himself; and, such is the power of mind over things material, when he went upstairs and crawled into bed he dropped at once into a doze, although the "Jewel Song" was setting the air a-quiver.

At ten-thirty, however, he came up straight in bed. Some horrid, shivery, nerve-scraping racket was making his scalp creep. Not yet fully awake, he was unable for a moment to account for the squeaking crescendos and wailing diminuendos of sound which fairly rent the air. Then he recognized Artie Concannon's prowess with the flute and chuckled gleefully.

At that moment the door of the room was pushed open softly. Mrs. Carney, her eyes blazing, thrust her head into the room.

"Now if this aint the limit for yez," she complained. "She's went and got Artie Concannon goin' on his flute."

Carney grinned knowingly at her from the bed and wagged his head.

"She has *not* got Artie Concannon goin', woman," he announced oracularly. "*I* got Artie Concannon goin' meself; and what's more, he's goin' to keep goin' till he drives 'em outer the neighborhood. In the meanwhile, Aggie," he went on, clapping his hands over his ears as a particularly wild spasm from the flute burst upon them, "there'll be no stayin' here. We'll go over to me sister Nora's place and board till this uproar is finished. I take it a week at the most'll drive them McNamaras out."

"Aw, the head ye have on yer, Con, dear," said Mrs. Carney proudly.

"Leave such things to me," said he, with a certain swelling out of his chest.

It was just eleven o'clock when the Carneys locked the house and went out to the corner to take a car to Carney's sister's place in a suburb on the other side of the city.

At eleven-five, Artie Concannon, just finishing a discordant run down the keys of the flute, paused for much-needed breath.

"Say," called a quiet voice from a window next door, "is it dead this time?"

Artie, still holding the flute in his hands, stepped across the room. Looking out of a window next door was Lily McNamara. Artie had had only fleeting glances of her before. He hadn't realized her lips were so red nor that her hair waved in that adorable fashion.

"Is it dead?" she asked with mock anxiety.

"Is what dead?" said Artie.

"That cat you've been trying to kill all the morning. Why don't you shoot it or chloroform it, and not—oh, excuse

me! I didn't realize you were trying to play a flute. Is *that* the best you can do?"

"I guess if I can stand your violin, you'll have to stand this," said Artie, and turned from the window.

From the next house came a frightful series of wails and groans.

"That's the way your playing sounds," called the girl. "If I couldn't play any better than that I should expect the neighbors to kick; but when I feed 'em classy stuff for nothing—a regular education in musical taste, I give 'em—I don't think they have any particular howl coming. Of course, if you really are trying to learn—"

Artie didn't catch the rest of it, for she was withdrawing from the window and her voice died away as she went.

Artie, seated on the edge of his bed, felt his face flushing. Also pride of craft was calling to him. He lifted the flute and wet his lips. Then he played "Killarney"—played it very well, considering his recent lack of practice.

Lily McNamara came to her window again.

"Why, you *can* play when you want to, can't you?" she said. "I'm glad of that. Maybe you'd like to come over and try some duets with me. I've got some peaches for flute and violin. It would be good for us both. Besides, if you really can play, there's going to be a chance for a flutist in the orchestra next week. The one that's there now is leaving next Monday. Bring your flute over here and we'll see how well you can play. If you're any good at all I think I can get you that chance."

Carney, the latter part of that week, thought he'd like to see how things were going. Therefore, one morning when he came from work at the foundry, instead of going to his sister's, he went back to his own house. It was eight o'clock when he got there. Generally at eight o'clock the violin began; but this morning no sound of it broke the stillness. Plainly Artie's flute had done the trick.

Suddenly Schubert's "Serenade" came drifting from the McNamara place. A violin began it, softly, wailingly, just as Carney had heard that violin begin it many times. Then a flute joined in. Carney rushed upstairs. From his own front windows he had an excellent view of the McNamaras' upstairs front room. There by the window, seated close together before a music rack, were Lily McNamara and Artie Concannon; and the way Schubert's "Serenade" was coming out was enough to wake a whole cemetery!

Occasionally Lily stopped her playing to count the time aloud for Artie. Occasionally she made him go over some illy-executed passage again.

"You're coming on," Carney heard her say once. "I wont be afraid to speak for that job for you. You can fill it all right. And then, if we keep on practicing here together every morning we'll get something better than a place in a movie-house orchestra, both of us. Now, let's make it good and loud this time."

Carney paced up and down the room until he saw Artie come out the McNamaras' gate. That was at half-past eleven. He tore down the stairs and pounced on the younger man.

"Say, lookee here, didn't I get that flute outer hock for you?" he demanded.

"Sure," said Artie.

"And what did I stiperlate—hey? What did I say you was to do when you got it again?" Carney bawled.

"You said I was to practice every time Lily McNamara did. Well, aint I?" Artie asked. "Please don't bother me Mr. Carney. I'm in a hurry just now. She's goin' to practice some hard stuff this afternoon before it's time to go to the show, and of course I'm goin' to practice with her like I promised you I'd do."

He shook off Carney's hand and stalked into his own gate. Carney stood staring after him for a moment. Then he turned and hurried away.

Ten minutes later he was sitting by the desk of Harry Coe, of Vernon & Coe, who handled most of the real estate in that particular suburb.

"Say," Carney was saying, "that house that I've got paid for all except the last few installments—I want to sell it. Yep, just what I paid for it'll do. And I want to rent another somewhere in a quiet neighborhood—one that you can guarantee is quiet, where a man can get a few hours' sleep in the daytime."

The Phantom Sky-Scraper

Another of Mr. Baker's strange legal situations: how the cunning brain of an old lawyer saved a man from being cheated out of the fruits of his life-long labor.

By GUY C. BAKER

COLONEL JEREMIAH FAWSETT stepped to the sidewalk from his motor-car, squared his broad shoulders, and turned towards the entrance to the Reibold Building, wherein were located the smartly-appointed law-offices of the eminent firm of which he was the distinguished head.

Just then there came to his ears the clamor of a fussy hoisting-engine near by, and, turning, he paused to let his glance travel contemplatively over the towering floors of a skyscraper rapidly stretching upward in the making. High above the street, he could see the swarms of laborers, ant-like on their aerie, industriously oblivious of the chasm beneath.

"By George," mused the Colonel reflectively, "looks like old Marston was finally to have a skyscraper in spite of his string of bad luck."

"What y' say, Colonel?"

Fawsett turned to discover the subject of his thoughts standing smilingly at his elbow.

"Why, bless me! Tommy, how are you?" exclaimed Fawsett cordially. "I was just saying to myself that you were soon to have a sky-bumper in spite of all your tough luck."

"Bet your life!" declared the other emphatically. "Guess they'll not switch me this time, eh, Colonel?"

"I don't think so, Tommy," agreed Fawsett as his eyes studied the vigorous, determined face of gray-haired Marston. "Tell you what—if they stop you this time I'd just put the bloomin' thing on wheels and cart it out to the woods."

There flashed to his mind recollection of Marston's disappointment and consternation when, a year or so before, having completed arrangements for the erection of a skyscraper on a location several blocks to the northward, he had been unexpectedly enjoined from realizing his life-long ambition because the height of his proposed building would have interfered with Jones Brothers' launching-depot for aëroplanes that was already installed on the top of an adjoining structure.

"Confound their modern jurisprudence," growled the Colonel irrelevantly. "When I first began reading law-books, a man owned everything beneath his land to the center of the earth, and everything above him to the uttermost pinnacle of the sky. But now—why, I suppose they'll be making us slice off the top of our buildings so as not to interfere with the wireless."

Marston gave an unintelligible grunt of concurrence.

"Then there was that government deal—that wasn't right, Marston," complained Fawsett sympathetically. "After all the trouble and scheming you were put to in order to secure options on that West Third Street property, had completed your arrangements, and begun to get your material on the ground—after all that, for the government coolly to step in and swipe it for a federal building—by George! it was too danged bad!"

Marston's eyes were fixed above, but again he concurred in the irascible Colonel's denunciation with a meaningful grunt.

"Then came the Ludlow Street mess—let's see, what was the rub there?"

"City widened street—after I had excavated two stories beneath the surface, too. Didn't leave me enough depth."

"That's right—I remember." Then, his eyes wandering upward over the building that had risen from the ground with such incredible rapidity, the Colonel added: "Then you got this. How long ago was it, Tommy, that you got it?"

"Just three months."

Fawsett chuckled good-naturedly as he turned to go.

"You'll not fall down this time, Marston—you'll have your sky-lights in place before the next demfool thing has time to bob up."

Five minutes later, Colonel Fawsett strolled into his private office, paused at the window for a moment to gaze across the roof of an intervening building toward the Marston structure; then, turning, he stepped over to his desk and pressed the buzzer.

"Petie," demanded the Colonel of the red-headed office-boy who entered in response to the senior member's summons, "is Robert in his room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"Mr. Dale is with him, sir."

"Tell him—er—but never mind. I'll go myself."

Which was exactly what the Colonel usually did. He had never become entirely accustomed to being waited upon.

A moment later, when Jeremiah Fawsett entered the glass-enclosed sanctum dedicated to the private uses of R. Bruce Fawsett, he at once sensed an atmosphere of suppressed excitement in the room. He paused just inside the door to let his glance travel from the troubled face of his son to the evident worry written in the face of Dale.

At that moment R. Bruce Fawsett impatiently clapped the telephone receiver back on the hook.

"Can't get him. We'll try again in a—why, hello, Father!—come in."

"You fellows look as if some one had muddied the swimmin' hole. What's the trouble?"

"We're trying to get hold of Marston," explained the younger Fawsett nervously.

"Marston? Why, I just left him a little while since down on the street. What do you want with Marston?"

"He's in for a bit more of sloppy weather, I fear," announced Dale vaguely.

"Not—not in the matter of his building?"

"Exactly that."

"The deuce you say! What in time is up now?"

"The old fellow's Nemesis seems to be dogging him pretty persistently," commented Dale irrelevantly.

"It wasn't intended that he should have a skyscraper, I guess," asserted the younger Fawsett.

"Confound it all," exploded the Colonel. "Stop gibbering in parables and let me have it! What's up?"

"A very awkward situation has developed," Dale hastened to explain, "involving the title to the ground on which Marston is building. It seems that another man owns it."

"Another man owns it?" gasped the elder Fawsett. "Why—that—can't be! There was an abstract—the abstract showed a perfect title—I looked it over myself!"

"So did I," bemoaned Dale, "but that fact does not better matters. The abstract was perfect as far as it went—but it didn't go far enough."

"When I used to attend to making abstracts myself," growled the Colonel, "I never—"

"Now hold on, Father," mildly admonished the son, "no one is to be censured in this matter. The omission was unavoidable. The man who owns it—"

"Who does own it?"

"Schwind—Leopold Schwind."

"Not that pink-cheeked, near-sighted young Dutchman down on the sixth floor who wears those shiny clothes?"

"That's the chap. Insurance agent. He changed his office to this side of the building a couple of weeks ago so that he could gaze at his skyscraper all hours of the day."

"Then he actually lays claim to the property?"

"I should say he does—not openly, however. You see, Petie overheard him whispering about it to his wife in the elevator this morning, and told me about it. I at once slipped over to the court house and made an examination of the Court and Birth Records. The point on which Schwind bases his claim to the ground was infernally soon made clear to me."

"The man must be crazy!"

"That's the devil of it—he's sane. Had he been crazy, he would have had a guardian, and that would have changed Marston's legal status. Besides, if he were crazy, no one would take him seriously. No, he isn't crazy."

"But heavens and earth, Bob, what *is* the point on which he bases this absurdity?"

"I wish that it were an absurdity, Father," brooded the son, "but it is not. Schwind's claim is alarmingly well founded in law."

"You see, Colonel," interjected Dale, "Marston bought that ground from Crabb, and Crabb, in turn, purchased it, about twenty-eight years ago, from the Administrator of Rudolph Schwind. This man Rudolph Schwind was killed in an accident. Two months after his death his Administrator sold this tract of land under order of Court to Crabb, and divided the proceeds between the widow and six children. Two months after that, Leopold was born."

"A-h-ha!" exclaimed the elder Fawsett as his face suddenly lighted with comprehension. "So *that's* the twist to it, eh? A posthumous child, having had no legal notice of the sale, and therefore never legally divested of its interest in the property!"

"That's it exactly."

"Well—let's—see—the statute of limitations—"

"Has not run out against him. Leopold had twenty-one years from that time to assert his claim, and, being a minor, he had ten more years after the disability of minority was removed. That makes thirty-one years in all. He still has three years to go on."

The Colonel pursed his lips and rubbed his chin thoughtfully as he arose, crossed to the window, and gazed across to where Marston's building was rapidly changing the sky-line.

"Poor old, ill-fated Tommy! It seems to be his scurvy luck, though. This will simply—" He turned sharply back into the room: "Does he know it?"

"No—but we left a call for him, and—"

The whir of the telephone-bell broke in on the conversation.

The younger Fawsett quickly seized up the instrument and whipped off the receiver.

"Hello—Mr. Marston?—this is Fawsett, Dale, Bux—"

Abruptly he stopped talking and jerked back in startled surprise.

The Colonel had sprung across the room and clapped the palm of his big hand over the mouth-piece of the transmitter.

"Don't tell him!"

The son stared up at his father in bewilderment.

"But—but—Father—"

Without further words, the Colonel peremptorily took the telephone instrument from the other's hands.

"Hello, hello—you, Tom?—yes—Fawsett—it was a mistake—Robert understood that I wanted you, but I don't. Awfully sorry you were bothered—all right—see you at the Club to-night."

Smiling an apology as he winked facetiously at his son, the Colonel calmly hooked up the receiver and replaced the instrument upon the table.

"Pretty smooth old liar, eh?"

"I—I don't quite get you, Father," puzzled the younger Fawsett.

"No?" Laughing softly, the Colonel

glanced from one to the other of his two perplexed partners. "Now you fellows needn't look at me in that danged mumpy way—I'm not ready for the bug-wagon yet. And another thing—I do not want either of you to breathe one word of this thing to a soul—understand?"

"Surely, Father—"

"Then there is Petie—caution Petie to strict silence under penalty of missing every Saturday game this season."

"But," demurred Dale, "we will have to tell Marston—we owe it to him. He will never forgive us if he ever learns that we knew about it. We can't afford to lose his business, Colonel, and—"

"Fact. Therefore—mum as a mummy for us."

The succeeding days measured into weeks, and still the Colonel remained "perched stubbornly on the lid." Several times Dale and the younger Fawsett attempted to re-open the discussion on the Marston affair, but each trial met with inflexible taciturnity on the part of the senior member.

On other occasions, on quietly entering the office, the Colonel chuckled to himself at finding one or the other of his partners solemnly stationed at the window and gazing across at the Marston structure, now towering above all its neighbors, with deep concern written in their faces.

Every afternoon promptly at 5:30, as was his custom from "time immemorial," the Colonel wandered into the Bicycle Club (the exclusive membership of which did not ride bicycles) and seated himself with expansive satisfaction next to "Tommy" Marston at the big round table where questions of state were solemnly discussed, Presidents learnedly chosen, and high-balls ceremoniously consumed by the membership of the club. On none of these occasions did the Colonel hint to his friend that he was building "on a foundation of sand."

Came the day at last when the splendid building was fully completed. Its completion marked an epoch in the city's architectural progress. The press featured the fact with becoming plaudit and commendation, and Marston himself was the happiest person within the city.

On the day preceding the one on which the contractors formally turned the building over to Marston, the Colonel paid one of his desultory visits to his own law-office.

He had scarcely seated himself at his desk when the younger Fawsett entered.

"Well, Father," he said, making an effort to conceal the reproach that involuntarily sounded in his voice, "Marston's memorial to the Dutch is finished."

"A dandy, isn't it?" replied the Colonel as he directed an admiring glance out of the window.

"Wh—when are you going to break the news to him?"

"To-day—this morning. Suppose you send for him."

"But—"

"Send for him," grimly repeated the Colonel.

A half-hour afterwards Marston cheerfully breezed into the private office of the elder Fawsett. Dale and R. Bruce Fawsett sat nervously at one side.

"Howdy, Tom," hailed the Colonel as he indicated a convenient chair with a careless sweep of his arm. "Feeling pretty chipper, eh?"

"Bet your life I am! Got good reason, haven't I?"

"B' demned if I know, Tommy," declared the Colonel. "Confidentially, though, I have my suspicions in the matter."

"I don't care what you have," replied the other good-naturedly. "Why did you send for me? Don't you know that I am busy?"

The Colonel thoughtfully regarded his friend for a moment, then, running his hand back over his long, white hair, he turned towards his son.

"Tell him, Robert."

The younger Fawsett started up in embarrassment.

"I—I rather think that you can do it better than I, Father—I would rather that you would."

"Lost your nerve, eh?" laughed the father. He turned smilingly toward Marston. "These young chaps never

give us old cockle-doodles credit for having nerve. But we have, now haven't we, Tommy?"

"Sure we have!" Marston stoutly agreed. Then, a quick shadow coming in his face, he glanced from one to the other of the men. "But—but is there really something the matter?"

"Yep—there is," confessed the Colonel coolly. "There's—well, there's hell to pay."

Marston moistened his lips, stared questioningly at the Colonel, but uttered no word.

"It concerns your title to that property out there," continued the Colonel quietly. "There is a kink in it."

"A kink?" puzzled Marston, "why—why what—do—you—mean?"

"Just that. Your jinx is still on the job."

"But—but you said—you all said—that my abstract was—straight as a string!"

"Right you are, Tommy, but that abstract failed to catch a little side-play that Fate injected into the thing."

Then, with his characteristic drollery, the Colonel briefly explained the situation to Marston.

Marston did not collapse. He did not even swear. For several heart-beats after the Colonel ceased speaking, he gazed at Fawsett in a dazed, bewildered sort of way; then, the previous happiness slowly dying in his face, his voice low and tremulous, he asked:

"When did you find this out?"

"Let's see," answered the Colonel as he felt of his chin thoughtfully, "—about four months ago, I should judge."

"Four months ago!" exclaimed Marston, springing to his feet.

"Yep—'bout that long."

"But—but—heavens and earth, Colonel! why didn't you—you—"

"Tell you?" Fawsett smiled indulgently. "That's what Robert and Mr. Dale have been asking."

"It occurs to me, Colonel, that it's scarcely a matter for your—your confounded waggishness."

"Now hold on to your steering-wheel, Tommy—don't get fussed. You see"—he paused to light a cigar with characteristic deliberation,— "but of course you do not see. How much does that tower of Babylon of yours stand you?"

"Two million dollars."

"Thought so. Some wad of shekels, that. How much was the ground on which it stands worth before you began to build?"

"Why—er—I suppose—what are you driving at, Colonel?"

"Let me ask the questions—you answer 'em."

"Well, that lot was worth all of thirty thousand dollars."

Fawsett quietly drew a paper from his pocket, studied it for a moment, grunted something unintelligible, swung about to the desk back of him, and began making figures on a piece of paper.

Suddenly he turned to face Marston.

"Got any money in your clothes?" he demanded sharply.

"Money?" puzzled Marston, "how much?"

"A couple of dollars?"

"Y-e-s."

"Then we're all going down to see the Dutchman." Turning toward Dale and his son, he added: "Come on—you fellows have to go along."

A very few minutes later the four men were greeting the near-sighted, pink-cheeked Leopold Schwind in his office on the sixth floor. They noted, with varying degrees of resentment, that, upon their entrance, a look of ill-concealed craft and triumph crept into the German's face.

The Colonel did not waste time on preliminaries.

"Schwind, our client here, Mr. Marston, has only to-day discovered that there is a slight cloud on his title to the ground on which he has erected his building. A quit-claim deed from you will cure it. I don't suppose you will object to doing this?"

"N-o—" drawled Schwind slowly, his eyes lighting with cunning, "—that is, of course, providing satisfactory terms can be agreed upon."

"You knew, then, that you had some legal hold on that ground?"

"Certainly I did."

"How long have you known it?"

The shifty-eyed insurance agent coughed nervously.

"I've known it for—oh, I suppose ten years."

"You knew that Mr. Marston intended building before he began?"

"I heard it—yes." Then, defiantly: "It wasn't my place to make a howl if he wanted to make me a present of a big building."

"Do not be unduly exercised, Schwind," cautioned the Colonel drily. "Marston has no intention of making you a present of that building."

"Then he'll move it, by hokey!" stuttered Schwind hotly. "He'll pay me my price, or return my ground as it was before!"

"How much was it worth before?"

"That aint the question; it's worth several millions *now!*"

"But what was it worth before?" insisted the Colonel.

"Mr. Marston paid thirty thousand for it, but it was worth thirty-six."

"Good," agreed the Colonel amiably. "We'll use your figures as a basis. Now let's see—you are twenty-eight, I believe?"

"Yes. But, begging your pardon, you—er—seem—"

"Exactly; I'm a pretty snoopy old customer. I looked it up. Besides, I looked up other things. You've had a joint interest in that ground for twenty-eight years. It has always stood vacant and brought no income. On the other hand, the taxes, street-assessments, et cetera, have been considerable. In fact, during the past twenty-eight years they amount, with interest, to the sum of"—the Colonel adjusted his glasses and consulted the paper in his hand—"of $35,991.00. You have paid none of these expenses. The difference is just nine dollars. You are entitled to one-seventh of that amount.

"Tommy, pay him $1.29."

Marston nervously counted out the designated amount and extended it towards the heir of Rudolph Schwind.

Schwind drew himself up haughtily.

"No y' don't—not by a damn sight!"

"This offer is made in good faith, Schwind," warned the Colonel. "Do you refuse the money?"

"Why yes—of course I do!"

"Very well," smiled the Colonel, "then we will have to do without the deed. Good morning."

As, shortly afterward, Jeremiah Fawsett preceded Marston, Dale and the younger Fawsett into his room, he turned to gaze, for a moment, smilingly into the worried, puzzle-marked faces of the three men. Then, laughing softly, he addressed Marston.

"That's all, Tom. You tendered that bobble-eyed Teuton the value of his interest in the land at his own figures. He turned it down. Now trot along just as if nothing had happened."

"But—but what can he do?"

"Nothing. You are in possession without fraud or collusion; you have offered to pay the adverse claimant the value of the land without improvements; you cannot, therefore, be dispossessed or interfered with in your possession until Schwind fully pays you the value of the property as it stands to-day. Think he will do it?"

"Jove!" exclaimed Dale with new-found elation, "that's right. Occupying-Claimants' act!"

"Exactly."

"But," quibbled Marston, returning mystification creeping into his face, "I still cannot understand why you did not tell me sooner."

"Tom," demanded the Colonel grimly, "if you had been compelled to stop all work on that building four months ago, and not been permitted to finish it, what would the part that had been built have been worth?"

"Worth?" queried the other, "why—er—confound it, Colonel, it wouldn't have been worth anything!"

"Certainly *not*. There you have it. The law only protected you in such improvements made by you before you received actual notice of Schwind's adverse claim. Had we told you then, you would have been under the necessity of either completing it at your peril or losing every dollar you had in it up to that time. I—"

"Father," interrupted R. Bruce Fawsett, stepping forward with outstretched hand, "shake! I want to—"

"Oh, that's all right, Bob," laughed the Colonel. "Now let's all slip over to the Bicycle Club. Tom wants to buy."

The Captain-Dowager

Here is a sea-story of a new sort, written by a woman who has lived for many years on shipboard. How the good ship *Exporter* raced with Death, and under the command of a woman, finally won to port, constitutes one of the most thrilling narratives in the history of the sea.

By ALICE DUNCAN

I WAS standing on the main-deck of the ship *Exporter,* near the booby hatch, when the old woman came over the rail. 'Twas the day before we left Hong Kong for 'Frisco. She stood on the inboard grating of the gangway, a big, fine creature, six feet tall, with broad shoulders and dressed in black silk with purple feathers in her bonnet (she spent a heap on fancy rigging). Alow and aloft she looked the ship over like she was captain and owner both, instead of passenger and part owner.

"Dick," says she to her son the captain, who'd come out from the cabin to meet her. "Dick, me boy, your port mizzen topmast backstay needs setting up; it's slack."

"Humph! hadn't noticed it myself," says he in a mind-your-own-business tone and with an ugly look. No man likes to have his mother tell him how to run his ship, especially when she knows as much about it as he does, and the stevedore's men around the deck are beginning to snicker.

She saw me next and came down the ladder with her hand out.

" 'Ow do you do, Mr. 'Utchins?" says she. "We're shipmates again."

I answered hearty and give her hand a good grip. I hadn't forgotten the time when we'd been shipmates in the past. 'Twas in '53, when Rufe Allerton of Searsport, Maine, had married her out of her father's pub' in Birkenhead, Liverpool, and brought her aboard the *Arethusa.* I was chief mate, and never in all my going to sea had I seen a landlubber pick up the sea lingo like she done. I wish my foremast hands were more like her. You'd tell her where the catheads was or what was meant by steering by and large, and she'd never forget. Rufe, he taught her to steer, and I can see her now in the wheelhouse gripping the spokes in her big hands as the wheel jumped to the pounding of the rudder, her hair flying in the spray-wet wind and the red and black checked shawl she wore at sea blowing to leeward. I admired her then and I admire her yet.

Five years were we shipmates, Rufe and Maggie and I, and we seen all kinds of rough times at sea. They was both brave, them two whom I called "old man" and "old woman" behind their backs. A captain's wife, even if she's only sixteen, is the old woman on ship-

board. Five years passed and then the end come.

That winter of '58 was a terrible one on the Atlantic seaboard. Many a fine ship foundered with all hands or was drove ashore. We come out deep-loaded from Boston for 'Frisco into a howling north-easter. Fog shut down thick as pea-soup. We done our best but couldn't save the *Arethusa*. She went ashore on the South Shoal near Nantucket.

That was a night! She lay broadside to the sea and it come leaping aboard her like a pack of white wolves. The main-deck was full to the rails and the men jumped into the rigging. Swash! went the doors of the after house. The old woman was below with Dick (he wasn't more than two years old). She come rushing up the steps with the water after her. The old man hurried her into the mizzen rigging, for we thought the ship would soon break up and there was her only chance—a mighty slim one. I seen him kiss her as he done it. They'd always been mighty fond of each other and I reckon he knew it was good-by.

Rufe and I was making her fast to the shrouds with the skysail halyards, when along come a bit of sea and buried us. I hung onto a backstay, gasping and choking in the icy smother. When it ebbed and I knew where I was, I looked to see the woman and child gone; but they was there. Rufe was gone instead, washed overboard.

I'd no time to give a thought to him then, though he's been in my mind since —many a time. The rigging was shaking as the mast kicked and plunged like a harpooned whale. Some of the men was still a-sticking like wet flies to the fore and main rigging, but most of 'em had been washed off. Amidships, nothing could be seen but the waves breaking over the ship and the stern was buried deep. I judged she'd soon break up. Once I shouted to Mrs. Allerton, but she didn't answer. I thought she was dead and kinder hoped so; seemed like it was only a question of time for all of us. Cold! it was freezing cold—I can feel it now. Why that woman and child wasn't froze stiff I don't know. The masts didn't fall, and at daybreak we was rescued by a tugboat and taken ashore. When the old woman was cut down from the rigging she was senseless and her arms was stiff as dead limbs of trees around the body of the young whelp who now stood on the deck of his ship, scowling because she told him to set up his backstays.

That was the old-time Maggie Allerton and I remembered as we shook hands. We was shipmates again now, and I wondered what would come of it.

The *Exporter* was a China ship—a full-rigged clipper and a beauty. You never saw a prettier sight than she was lying in Hong Kong harbor ready for sea. The ship *Lyman J. Roberts,* Captain Morehouse, was sailing on the same day, and Morehouse and his daughter—Louisy Ellen her name was—come over on board the *Exporter* the evening before. Phin Morehouse was a regular old blowhard, and he began betting Dick he'd beat him home. Dick took the bets, though he didn't like very much to be guyed for a youngster. The old woman didn't like it either. She had been blamed for buying into the *Exporter* so that her son could be made captain. Men said he was too young, being only twenty-one.

So she says: "Dick is a rare lad for carrying sail. We'll be waiting for you on the dock in 'Frisco."

"Which dock do you like best?" Morehouse asked.

"Hold Pacific will do me."

"Bet you fifty I'll be waiting for you there with a cork fender," says he.

She laughed and took the bet.

But Louisy Ellen—a little nipping thing, full of ladylike ways—was listening to how cockney the old woman talked and how loud her voice was. Next day when Dick asked her to marry him she says: "No; I don't like your mother."

Now instead of hating the girl who said that, Dick was set hard against the old woman. He'd been well educated with her money and thought himself a gentleman. He looked down on the old woman because she'd been a barmaid. He did his best to make her stay in Hong Kong, where she'd lived for the last four years, and when he couldn't change her mind, she being lonesome

for the States, the thought of his wrongs kept working in him like a bloody conscience.

So we sailed, and from the first it was fight, fight, fight between that mother and son about how much sail to carry and what course to steer. She'd tell him how your pa always carried skysails in such a breeze and then she'd come up on deck and tell me or the second mate to set 'em. I wouldn't; I knew better; but poor Jenkins would and then get blue murder from the captain for doing it. But Dick was a rare lad for carrying sail, and the first ten days out we made splendid time. We sighted the *Roberts* astern one day and felt good. Then two days later we saw her ahead blowing along with every thing set like a big white sea-bird.

That made Dick wild, and when his mother come below advising him to set the stunsails he up and cursed her in words that was tempting the Lord to strike him dead. He said he hated the sight of her, that she'd ruined his life and if he ever got out of this ship he'd go cook on a coaster before he'd command anything she owned. He shouted so I heard some of this in my room and went on deck in a hurry for fear I'd go in and knock him down. Pretty soon she come up on the poop and stood looking ahead at the foaming sea under the foot of the foresail, with the old red and black shawl blowing to leeward and an awful look on her face. I come aft and asked her advice about setting the stunsails, just to hearten her up.

"Mr. 'Utchins," she says, "I'm going to show that silly boy of mine that I'm some good if I aint a lady."

I don't know how she proposed to do it; maybe she didn't know herself, but her chance come too soon.

Next day the pest struck the ship. To this day I don't know what it was. Some kind of China fever, but it spread like wildfire. In a week half the men were dead; and the others—all but two—were in their bunks too weak to move. The old woman, the Chinese cook and steward and I were the only other well folks on board. Dick kept up till he could hardly see. One day when he'd crawled up to windward and was trying to shoot the sun I come up and took the sextant out of his shaking hand. "You go below, sir," I says. "I'll take the sight."

"No, I'm not sick. Confound you, if I give up who's going to sail the ship? I've got to beat the *Roberts*."

"I'll beat her for you," I says, wondering how I was to do it with no crew.

Well, he went below and tumbled into his berth, too far gone to care whether we sank or swam. Next day we sighted the *Roberts* on the port quarter to leeward. "She'll soon make that up," says I to the old woman. "We've lost the race."

"Lost the race—not much!" says she. "Wait till the sick men are well and we'll beat 'er hinto the Golden Gate."

"Yes," says I. "As the feller said, 'Pigs might fly but they're pretty unlikely birds.'"

Oh, them days that followed! If I live to be ninety I'll never forget 'em. You landlubbers with doctors and nurses always within hail don't know what it is to pore over the pages of "The Household Physician for the use of Families, Mariners and Miners," till you've no stomach for your victuals, and then mix up doses wondering whether they'll kill your patients or cure 'em.

Of the two lubbers left on deck, neither could steer; so Mrs. Allerton and I shouldered that job. She done most of it, while I tended the sick, especially the captain, who was as fractious as a teething baby and wanted something every five minutes—but not his mother. He never asked for her. She'd look at me wistful as I come up to relieve her at the end of her long five and six hour spells at the helm, hoping he'd said something but he never did.

You fellows on shore will wonder why we didn't speak some ship and get help. I answer that no vessel come near enough to signal. Three times we'd sighted the *Roberts* since leaving port, but always in the distance.

One night about four bells in the middle watch one of the men called me, saying there was a ship on the starboard quarter. I'd just gone below, leaving the wheel to the old woman. But I tumbled

up again in a hurry. There was a faint light of moonshine through the clouds and it showed us the shape of a large vessel not a ship's-length away. I yelled to the old woman to put the wheel hard over, but there was no wind and the ship wouldn't mind her helm.

The stranger showed no lights, not even the red gleam of the port side-light, but thinks I, the look-out may be asleep and not know it's out. So I hailed her loud enough to be heard in a gale of wind. No answer. I hailed again with hope thumping at my heart. Then the moon broke through the clouds and shone bright upon her. She was a derelict. God knows how long she'd been drifting around the sea. Her sails were all torn and her decks was empty. Still as the grave she swung by, so close I could have tossed a biscuit aboard. The current carried her out of sight ahead and my hopes with her.

If one of my lubbers—my crew of two men—hadn't come aft just then and said he wasn't going to stand no look-out no more, I might have broke down, but the job of booting him off the poop made the blood warm again in my veins. "Pigs might fly," I says, "and the age of miracles aint over yet."

Next evening when I went forward at eight bells to see the sick men, one of 'em, Connor his name was, asked for the old woman. The men liked her because she wasn't a lady. Connor was a decent feller—a quartermaster in my watch—and he was dying. So I put a lubber at the wheel, telling him how to hold it, for there was quite a breeze that night, and the old woman and I went forward. In the forecastle a little slush lamp was burning, and showed the poor devils groaning in their bunks. Connor had a watch he wanted sent home to his mother and a letter wrote to some girl. The old woman wrote it for him, promising to send it if we got in, and he died quiet, holding onto her shawl. But it was too much for her. As we went aft again she suddenly fell back fainting into my arms. I dragged her into the cabin and laid her on the floor. Guess I was kind of excited or had got into the habit of giving folks medicine, for there was a glass of castor-oil on the table and I tried to make her drink it. She was fighting it off when Dick come out and stood hanging on to the frame of his door and shaking.

"You look after her," he says fiercely to me. "Don't you let her go forward again, do you hear? If she gets the fever we're done for." She staggered to her feet and stood looking at him. For the first time he was taking some thought for her. Then with a cry her arms went round him and I slunk out and left 'em together. "The age of miracles aint over yet," says I, and somehow I was sure we'd be rescued.

But the sea was flat as a plate, with no sail or trail of smoke to break the round horizon. As the days passed, Dick he got worse; he was the sickest of 'em all. The old woman was with him all the time she could take from the wheel, and he clung to her like a baby.

Late one afternoon I give the helm to one of the lubbers and went down to my supper. The old woman was there with her thin, anxious face. She'd lost as much as twenty pounds since we left Hong Kong. She looked at me sharply; she and I used to watch each other for signs of the pest in them days. All at once the smell of the good canned meat on my plate turned me sick. I got up and made for the door like a passenger on a steamship. But this was no sea-sickness.

The old woman stood leaning her hands on the table and staring at me. "My God!" she gasps.

"Yes," I says thickly, "it's got me, but don't you be scared. This aint my watch below yet."

I went up on deck with the planks sliding away from my feet as it seemed—sent the lubber forward and took the wheel. The spokes seemed spinning round, and the compass-card was spinning too, so I couldn't see the points or tell whether she was heading north by west or sou' southeast. What's more, I didn't care.

'Twas a hazy kind of a night, with the stars shining dimly. I could hear the sea washing round the rudder; and the ship was full of them little creakings and groanings you hear at night in calm weather. The yards creaked as they swung and the sails flapped against the backstays.

I hung over the wheel watching that spinning compass with my eyes half shut. It seemed years before the old woman come to relieve me. At last she was standing in the doorway blotting out the stars.

"God help me," she was saying as if to herself in a slow, hopeless way. "My boy's dying and I can't stay with him. I've got to steer his ship."

I didn't rightly sense her words. I didn't understand that she was wanting me to keep the helm a while longer so's she could stay with Dick, who was very low that night. The fever was so heavy upon me that I only thought of my own longing to sit down somewhere and lay my aching head where it could rest. So I give her the wheel and stumbled out of the wheelhouse like a drunken man. I sat me down on the bitts, and laying my arms on the rail dropped my head on them. Stupor come over me, and yet I knew she was standing at the wheel. I could see her by the light of the binnacle lamp. Her lips were moving. Then she faded away and I was dead to all seeing and feeling.

I'm ashamed now when I think of that night. That I, a human being with a heart in my body, could keep that mother standing there through the long hours and let the captain lie untended in his bunk with no one to give him even a drink of water. Now when I think of myself as smart, or feel like bragging, the memory of that night comes over me and shuts my mouth.

But feel as I may, nothing can alter the fact that it was eight bells in the first watch when Mrs. Allerton took the wheel and past eight bells in the middle watch when I come to myself. All that time, eight hours, she stood there.

I was roused by one of the men grabbing me by the shoulder and shouting "Mr. Hutchins, Mr. Hutchins! Ship on the port beam!"

I staggered to my feet. I saw a big lump of blackness stealing down to us out of the shadows. No derelict this time. Her blessed lights was shining like stars of hope across the water and a man was hailing: *"Exporter!* Ship ahoy, there; ship ahoy!"

By God's mercy 'twas a steamer that hailed us. No sailing-ship could have towed us into 'Frisco like that steamer done. We had to stay by the ship; no other craft would have us pest-stricken mortais aboard. But the steamer captain sent his doctor to us—who, when he saw the doses I'd been giving my patients, hove the whole mess of drugs over the side. "My friend," says he to me, "you are a brave man and a good sailor, but keep your hands away from the practice of medicine or you'll end on the gallows."

As we towed in through the Golden Gate, another ship followed us, sailing in with a pilot from the Farallones. She was the *Lyman J. Roberts* and my pigs was flying, for we'd beaten her after all. Seemed the same pest was aboard her too, or had been. She'd put in to the Sandwich Islands and waited there a month or two before she could get another crew.

Dick and I were in hospital a long time. He didn't die in spite of my medicines. The age of miracles wasn't over, for he come out of that fever another man. One day when the quarantine was lifted and a couple of ship brokers came in to where he was lying in his cot with the old woman sitting beside him, and congratulated him on his safe arrival, he put his arm around her waist and says he: "Give her the praise. She's a nurse and a mother and the bravest captain that ever sailed the Seven Seas."

What? That aint all? I thought it was. Oh! yes, about Dick's girl: Louisy had had her share of trouble and work aboard the *Roberts* during the pest, though she hadn't taken it herself. It showed her how much lady-like ways was worth at such a time, and done her good. She and her dad come up to the hospital to see Dick, and while Phin Morehouse was joking the old woman about the cork fender, and promising to send her the biggest one in all 'Frisco, Louisy was talking to Dick with her eyes full of tears. "I don't wonder now you are proud of your mother," says she. "Try and forget what I said in Hong Kong and forgive me, wont you, Dick?"

And I thought Dick looked as if he would.

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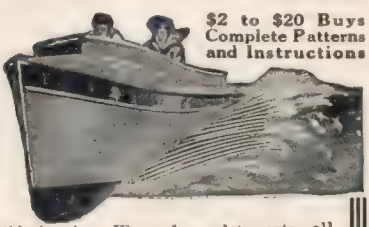

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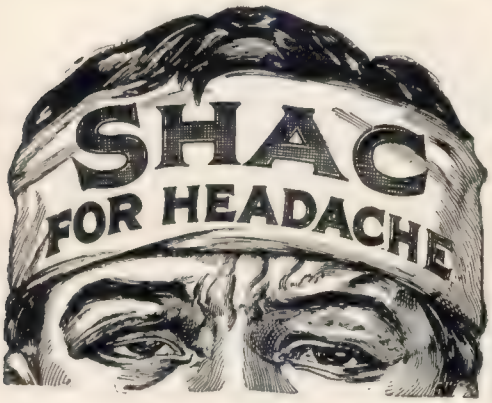

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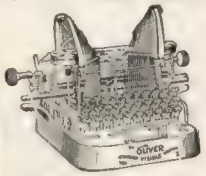

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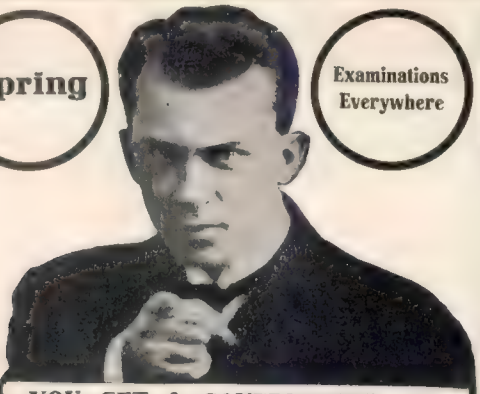

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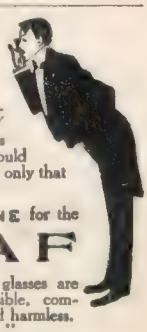

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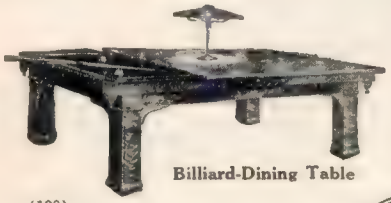

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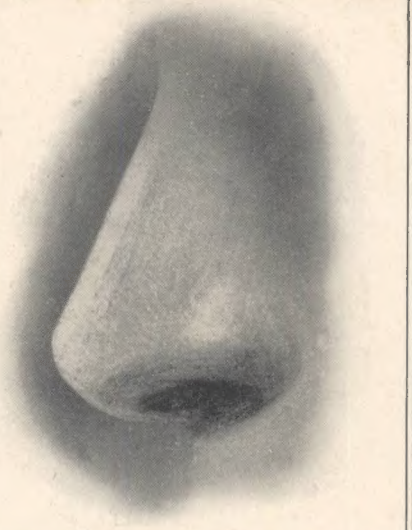

Conspicuous nose pores

How to reduce them

Complexions otherwise flawless are often ruined by conspicuous nose pores.

In such cases the small muscular fibres of the nose have become weakened and do not keep the pores closed as they should be. Instead these pores collect dirt, clog up, and become enlarged.

Begin this treatment tonight

Wring a cloth from very hot water, lather it with Woodbury's Facial Soap, then hold it to your face. When the heat has expanded the pores, rub in *very gently* a fresh lather of Woodbury's. Repeat this hot water and lather application several times, *stopping at once when your nose feels sensitive.* Then finish by rubbing the nose for a few minutes *with a lump of ice.*

Woodbury's Facial Soap cleanses the pores. This treatment with it strengthens the muscular fibres so that they can contract properly. But do not expect to change in a week a condition resulting from years of neglect. Use this treatment *persistently.* It will gradually reduce the enlarged pores until they are inconspicuous.

Tear off the illustration of the cake shown below as a reminder to get Woodbury's and try this treatment. Try Woodbury's also for general toilet use. See what a delightful feeling it gives your skin.

Woodbury's Facial Soap costs 25c a cake. No one hesitates at the price *after their first cake.*

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For 4c we will send a sample cake. For 10c, samples of Woodbury's Facial Soap, Facial Cream and Facial Powder. Write today to The Andrew Jergens Co., Dept. 5-A, Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, O.

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